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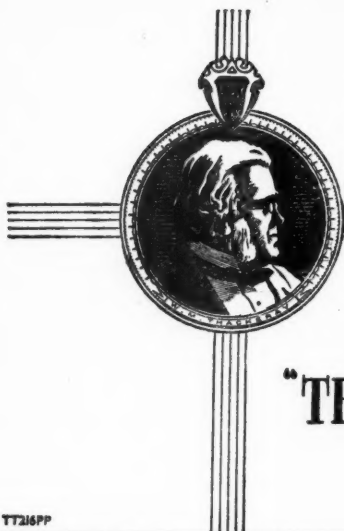
THE
CORNHILL

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THE CORNHILL



No. 969

WINTER 1946

MAGAZINE

EDITED BY PETER QUENNEL

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JOHN MURRAY, 50 ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON, W.1

EDITORIAL NOTE

After twelve months of troubled hope, the prospect of any final withdrawal of war-time paper restrictions seems as indefinite as ever. But in 1947 the CORNHILL expects to publish a minimum of four issues: and it is possible, if not probable, that during the second half of the year we shall be in a position to re-establish ourselves on a more satisfactory footing. Meanwhile we wish to express our gratitude to diligent contributors and appreciative and patient readers. Among items of which we feel particularly proud in the present number of the CORNHILL are 'Ruskin and Effie Gray', a pre-view of what we believe to be an unusually interesting and important biographical discovery, and 'Le Dialogue Français,' by André Gide, a brief essay by the patriarch of French letters on the characteristics of the French spirit as revealed in five centuries of triumphant self-analysis. '... Si Michelet et Hugo s'élèvent contre l'Église et les églises, (writes Gide) c'est encore avec un profond sentiment religieux"—a sentence that might well be taken to heart by captious foreign critics, to whom the apparent contradictions of French thought and life today are sometimes baffling and disturbing.

[Subscriptions for the CORNHILL are now available from any bookseller or from 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1. A subscription for 4 issues costs 10s. 8d. and for 8 issues 21s. 4d. including postage. A few copies of the last issue, Autumn, are being reserved for those who would like to start a subscription to include that issue.]

Ruskin and Effie Gray. I

Extracts from an Unpublished Correspondence

Among prophetic voices raised in England during the 19th century, Ruskin's was one of the most harmonious, sustained and nobly representative. It would be convenient, no doubt, were such voices disembodied: if all that we knew of them were the messages they brought us: if they had thundered down like the voice from Sinai or come rustling like the oracles of Zeus through the oak-leaves of Dodona. In fact, our appreciation of each message is qualified by our vision of an individual personality. Behind Carlyle the prophet we glimpse the atrabilious, cantankerous, at times slightly ridiculous hero of Mrs. Carlyle's correspondence; and our view of Ruskin, by the same fatality, is inseparable from what we divine of his extremely curious character. Both strike us as profoundly unhappy men—unhappy not so much because the circumstances of their external lives were thwarting and embittering, as because within themselves they could find no peace and quiet, no refuge from a mysterious sense of guilt and no means of establishing a truce between antagonistic private impulses. Thus, they were the teachers who could not be taught; and, although they pronounced doctrines and promulgated laws, they were unable to discover any law or rule that would ensure their own tranquillity. Purveyors of clues to the world around them, they remained lost, as long as they existed, in a dark and desperate labyrinth.

Both failed in marriage—Carlyle at least partially, Ruskin disastrously and completely. Hitherto the catastrophe of Ruskin's married life has been examined almost exclusively from Ruskin's and from his parents' standpoint. Now a mass of papers in the possession of the descendants of Sir John Millais (who became Euphemia Gray's second husband in 1855) illuminate the relationship from an entirely different angle. We see John Ruskin through the eyes of his wife, a young woman of great attractions and considerable shrewdness. We watch her good resolutions being gradually undermined by the possessive machinations (which may well have been more than half unconscious) of Mrs. Ruskin senior; and we note Ruskin's emotional subservience to the household on Denmark Hill. In one respect, he had never fully developed: he adored the child in the woman he had married, but adult femininity, except as it was exemplified by his mother, disgusted and alarmed him. Years later, he was to pursue and lose another childish phantom in a precocious adolescent, the ethereal Rose La Touche.

Towards his wife, as a grown woman of perfectly normal instincts, Ruskin's attitude would appear to have been neither generous nor understanding. Yet, when the phantom was still a phantom, before the wraith had begun to solidify in a distressingly physical guise, there can be no question of the deeply romantic emotions with which Euphemia Gray inspired him. Thanks to the courtesy of Sir Ralph Millais and of Admiral Sir William James (whose forthcoming book, 'The Order of Release,' is founded on the hitherto unpublished Gray and

Ruskin correspondence) we print in the present issue of the CORNHILL extracts from John Ruskin's letters to Euphemia Gray, written after their betrothal, in the years 1847 and 1848. Not only do these letters finally dispose of the suggestion (which Ruskin encouraged), that he had never really loved his wife and had married to please his parents, but they throw a vivid light on the writer's psychology and anticipate some of the rhythms and cadences of his finished prose-work. They are touching letters, and they are also tragic—in so far as they show a real and deep and passionate affection utterly incapable of making any genuine human contact with the object that has provoked it, but around which it continues to circle with adoring moon-struck assiduity.

DENMARK HILL

(Nov. 9, 1847)

MY OWN EFFIE—my kind Effie—my mistress—my friend—my queen—my darling—my only love—how good of you—and I can't answer you a word today. I am going into town with my mother in half an hour—and have all manner of things to do, first—but I am so glad that you have my letter speaking about this very thing— Indeed I *never* will be jealous of you—and I will keep that purer form of jealousy—that longing for more love—within proper limits—and you will soon find out how to manage this weakness—and perhaps to conquer it altogether; I can't enter into details today—but indeed it was anxiety and weakness of nerve which made me so fretful when you were here—natural enough I think—and even then, I was only jealous of *some* people—and that because I was hurt by your *condescension*—it was, I think—at the root—more pride than jealousy—I was speaking of large parties to my mother yesterday for you—she said 'You wouldn't like to see her surrounded by a circle of gentlemen like Mrs. Liddell?' 'Indeed I should,' I said.

* * * * *

DENMARK HILL

(Nov. 11th, 1847)

Evening. My Mother gave me a message for you yesterday—which I forgot! an important one, too that you must not—though—course—you will know this without her telling you—but it may be as well to remind you—that any dresses you may be buying for next year, had better be of the plainest kind—for travelling—of stuffs that will not crush—nor spoil, nor be bulky in a carriage—for you know we shall be *four*—and very simply made—you will only want one of any more visible or exhibitable kind—in case we might go to opera at Paris—or be seen a day or two here, before leaving. You may guess there is no *dressing* at Chamouni—the higher the rank commonly the plainer the dress—and it would be no use to leave handsome dresses behind you here, merely to find them out of fashion when you come back. You will not need them very warm—the climate of Chamouni is much about the same as that of Perth—morning and



[From a portrait by G. F. Watts]

EUPHEMIA RUSKIN

' Ah, Effie—you have such sad, wicked ways without knowing it . . . such slight—short—inevitable—arrowy glances from under the bent eyelashes . . . such *desperate* ways of doing the most innocent things . . . '

Ruskin to Euphemia Gray, December 1847



[From a portrait by J. E. Millais

JOHN RUSKIN, 1853

'We have just got the picture placed . . . I am far more delighted with it now than I was when I saw it in your room . . . My father and mother say the likeness is perfect—but that I look bored—pale—and a little too yellow.'

Ruskin to John Millais, December 11th, 1854

evening—but with hotter sun in the middle of the day—but have them close up to the throat—for fear of ice chills—*notice* this—which is *my* advice especially—and also—not to have the flounces *too* full—nor *too long*—it will not do to be exposed to chance of treading continually on your dress in going up hill—and the Swiss hills are steep, mind;—you had better have one dress quite cool—Geneva and Vevay are often as hot as Italy. For the rest—I need not say to you—knowing your good taste—not to have even your best dresses *fine* or expensive—Your beauty is conspicuous without the slightest adornment—and the least *over* dress would appear as if you *wished* to draw all eyes to you—it should be your study to dress if possible—so as to *escape unobserved*—while yet the dress—when it *was* observed—should be perfect of its kind—becoming—graceful—perhaps even—now and then—a little piquant—but never conspicuous. I don't know—but I have a great fancy that I shall ask you sometimes to put on your finest dresses when we are alone—and always your simplest when we are going into public.

When we are *alone*—You and I—together—*Mais—c'est* inconceivable—I was just trying—this evening after dinner—to imagine our sitting after dinner at Keswick—*vous et moi*.—I couldn't do it—it seemed so impossible that I should ever get you all to myself—and then I said to myself 'If she should be dull—if she should not be able to think but of her sweet sisters—her deserted home—her parents—giving up their chief joy—if she should be sad—what *shall* I do—And—if she should *not*—what shall I do—either—how shall I ever tell her my gladness—Oh—my own Love—what shall I do indeed—I shall not be able to speak a word—I shall be running round you—and kneeling to you—and holding up my hands to you as Dinah does her paws—speechless—I shan't do it so well as Dinah though—I shall be clumsy and mute—at once perfectly oppressed with delight—if you speak to me I shall not know what you say—you will have to pat me—and point to something for me to fetch and carry for you—or make me lie down on the rug and be quiet—or send me out of the room until I promise to be a good dog; and then you let me in again—I shall be worse—What *shall* I do?'

Friday evening. . . . We are all going to Folkestone for a week—I shall hardly be able to write you a word tomorrow—though I hope for a letter—but after this—I trust I shall be free.

I am a little ashamed of speaking so much of your fair face—Effie—but indeed, when I search into my heart—it is not the features that I care for—it is the sweet—kind—half pensive—depth of expression which is the great charm. I have been intending a long time to tell you this—but reserved it for the philosophical letter—only I am afraid of your again beginning to think that I only love you 'because you are pretty.' Saturday—I have your precious letter—my love—I will

write about March from Folkestone—D.V.—when I have thought over the matter a little to find out all that may be said in its favour—But how *can* you think of our 'quarrelling'—or make resolutions in case of such a contingency.

I am sure it is *physically impossible*—and this I say seriously. Fools may quarrel even when they love each other—or wise—people quarrel, when they don't;—but we are not fools: I think we are both reasonable people—with something more than the average of sense—and then we love each other—how deeply? Tell mama she may just as well think of our quarrelling *before* marriage—as after it.—I expect it is the likelier—or rather the less inconceivable—and I think we are just as likely to give each other up altogether, as to do *that*—

Ever my dearest—fairest—kindest Effie
Yours beyond all telling.

* * * *

FOLKESTONE

(Nov. 21, 1847)

I do believe that the most delightful hour of all the journey is that of hope—the *first* stage from Calais. The two hours passed rapidly among the breezy downs with their spots of sheep and their rich brown cattle standing sideways on the slopes to graze—their hides shining in the sun like—I don't know what—something between velvet and polished old mahogany. I just got back in proper time for afternoon service. The old vicar—a sad example of the worst sort of monkish—sensual—idle—unable clergyman, gave us a bungled and boyish rhapsody which made me angry. When I got out—the sun was just setting—the sky was clear in the east—and I ran down to the beach to soothe myself by seeing the moon rise. It rose large over the sea, beside Shakespeare's cliff—nearly as large as the great cliff itself;—the tide—its great worshipper—was rising with it—and sobbed out its subjection—the sea gulls shrieked as if they didn't know what to make of it—or thought the moon had got into mischief—and had no business to be so low down—as low as they, right down on the waves.

It was half past four when I got in. I dressed—there was no time to sit down to write before five.

So I dined—and drawing close to the fire—with a book in my hand—a book your Uncle Andrew had given me—I began thinking whether I should write to my father or you first. A little grave reflection determined me on the former—and induced me to write rather a longer letter than I otherwise should—lest I should feel—or he should *say*—that I neglected *him*—now I had you to write to.

That done—I looked for note paper—found the two scraps only—filled them—thought it wrong to read nothing all day, read some of

Uncle Andrew's book—then some of Milner's Church History,—over which I am grieved to say—I fell asleep.

I was waked by the winds shaking the window and wanting to get in. I rose and looked out. The moon was oppressed among fast flying cloud—and cast only a dim light on the sea—whose surf was roaring and sighing alternately—like a thundercloud with an asthma. I thought of going out to look at it—and thought I had better not—thought of reading some more history—and found I couldn't, then thought of going to bed, and did.

* * * * *

FOLKESTONE

(Nov. 30, 1847)

MY BELOVED EFFIE,

I never thought to have felt time pass slowly any more—but—foolish that I am, I cannot help congratulating myself on this being the last day of November— Foolish, I say—for what pleasure soever may be in store for us, we ought not to wish to lose the treasure of time—nor to squander away the heap of gold even though its height should keep us from seeing each other for a little while. But your letter of last night shook all the philosopher out of me. That little undress bit! Ah—my sweet Lady— What naughty thoughts had I.— Dare I say?— I was thinking—thinking, naughty—happy thought, that you would soon have—some one's arms to keep you from being cold! Pray don't be angry with me. How *could* I help it?—how can I? I'm thinking so just now, even. Oh—my dearest—I am not so 'scornful' neither, of all that I hope for— Alas—I know not what I would not give for one glance of your fair eyes—your fair—saucy eyes. You cruel, cruel girl—now that was *just* like you—to poor William at the Ball. I can see you at this moment—*hear* you. *If* you wanted to dance with *me*, William! *If*!! You saucy—wicked—witching—malicious—merciless—mischief loving—torturing—martyrising—unspeakably to be feared and fled—mountain nymph that you are—'If!' When you knew that he would have given a year of his life for a touch of your hand. Ah's me—what a world this is, when its best creatures and kindest—will do such things. What a sad world. Poor fellow,— How the lights of the ballroom would darken and its floor sink beneath him— Earthquake and eclipse at once. And to be 'if'd' at by you, too; Now—I'll take up his injured cause—I'll punish you for that—Effie—some time—see if I don't— *If* I don't. It deserves—oh—I don't know what it doesn't deserve—nor what I can do.

I think I shall never be able to tell you what I intended—how I hoped you might find pleasure in helping me— I must tell you now—that you may find some way of atonement for your 'ifs' by doing good to somebody— As for poor William—you can do *him* none now

—there is but the *coup de grâce* to be given—the sooner the better—and the flower of Love lies bleeding : to be borne in his bright plume—How long ? Well—this was what I thought—only I should tell you first—that as I had confessed in my last letter to being fretful, and as I think you have heard me say of myself that I was certainly not to be put out of temper—I set myself diligently this morning when I woke in the dark, to consider and determine the difference between being ‘fretful’ and being ‘out of temper.’ I found however the distinctions run so much finer than I liked—and the bounds of the parish so difficult to beat, in some places, that I determined I wouldn’t be fretful any more—if I could help it—lest other people should say I was ‘out of temper.’ This then was my thought—Methought—that your exceeding fondness of, and acquaintance with, History, might lead you to take some interest in the histories and associations connected with the various edifices we should see abroad,—or indeed anywhere. That, while I was drawing or measuring—or going up on leads and tiles—and such places where you couldn’t come—(Such scrambles as I have had—Effie—Next to an Alpine summit—an old church roof is the most exciting thing in the world) you—in the aisle below—might be examining for me such written traditions of the place as were most interesting—and that from doing this—you would gradually come to take an interest in the expression—style and sculptured histories, of the Architecture itself. Keen sighted as you are, I think you would soon find great delight in deciphering inscriptions—interpreting devices—and unravelling aenigmas. [*Sic*].—Gradually I think you might become far, far my superior in judging of dates and styles—and from your interest in these disputable questions—you would gradually be led to examine and to feel the relative beauty—propriety—or majesty of this or that manner. I think the pencil which would at first be in your hand to copy a broken letter—or note the order of a series of sculptures—would gradually come to make its own unpretending little memoranda of a capital here—an ornament there—a quaint piece of costume—or a graceful line of mosaic—I think you would probably see me take up these memoranda with avidity—carry them farther—and make use of them—that you would gradually be encouraged to carry them further yourself—and that in a little time—no very distant one—things might even come to such a pass as that I should be able to say to you—‘Effie—I want those three capitals—and a bit of that frieze—will you, *please*, do them for me while I go up to examine the vaulting ?’ And that you would do them for me with great pleasure to yourself, and with more neatness and accuracy than any architect !

Now mind I do not *expect* this in the least— I do not wish you to try for it—not to do anything in the least painful or that costs you an effort— In fact—if it were done with an effort, it would be ill done—

I shall not even be grateful to you—(added) fancy! Not grateful! if it so happens—because I would not have it happen unless it gave you pleasure— But that if it should happen, you would be of the greatest service to me on a thousand occasions—and that we should have a subject on which our sympathy would procure us a thousand pleasures—is most certain, and I think it is *likely* to happen also— For you will have often to wait for me while I am examining cathedrals, by the *hour*—you may do it at the Inn—but in most cases—when it is not cold, I imagine it will be in the church—that you may see what I am about—see me getting my coat all white over, and creeping into crypts on my hands and knees, and into roodlofts and turrets by inexplicable stairs etc. Well, you will soon find—however much you may be delighted with the sensation of the thing at first—that one cathedral, carelessly seen—is much the same as another—you will be tired of sauntering up and down aisles—hearing fat priests chanting dull bass discords—or watching old women mutter over their beads. You will begin to ask me what I find so interesting to keep me all that time. I shall instantly stop and show you—as long as you will attend—I shall give you something to find out or to count—or to read for me— You will be interested—whether you will or no—you will notice the same thing when you see it in another church—you will find the other church more interesting in consequence—so the thing will go on—at least I think it most likely that it will. But if not—you will have to pass many an irksome hour—for you know I must go on with my *profession* and—while for a certain time of the day—I shall always be entirely *yours*—to go and be with you where you choose—yet for another part of the day, and that—usually the largest—you will have to be *mine*—or to sit at home.—So now you see what a thoroughly *selfish* motive—besides many an unselfish one, I had for asking you to take care of your sight.

. . . Ah—my sweet—here's another—dear—dear letter— The sun is setting softly over the sea, and rosy clouds are seen beyond the blue of it. I'll read it at once. Bless me—mortar coloured wax again! Ah—the sweet little round seal with the E— One kiss—and then—no, I won't break it—round it with the penknife— Ah mine own Effie—I have read it all through, quite to the end—and it seems as if you had been here for five minutes, and had gone away again—as the sun has set—and left me here, so sad— I really think your letters do me nearly as much mischief as good— I feel so blank and heavy hearted when I come to the end, and think—now it must be three long days before I get another.

. . . How curious—that we should both have the same foolish feeling about *twenty*. Do you know I had actually written something—a beginning of a sentence—about it—in one of these letters—and scratched it out—you will find the place if you look— The

fact is—I have felt the loss of my own youth so dreadfully that I grudge every hour, now that keeps your youthful sympathy back from me— And—impatient though I am— I should not be fretful about the mere *putting* off the thing—if you and I could be—five years hence—18 and 28—I could wait like Patience on a monument. But Time won't wait—and do you know—I was taken in, a year— When my mother said to me in October—last year— Only wait this winter, John—and then you shall see her,—I consented (though sulkily) because I thought you were only seventeen; you know you corrected me only on your birthday.— If I had known—or thought—of the truth—I wouldn't have waited an hour—and much suffering I should have saved to myself, and a little, perhaps to you—for, I don't know whether you *were* or not—but you really *looked* distressed that night you left Denmark Hill— And I was going to have said something of this to you in my letter—and then I thought it would vex you—and scratched it out. But were it not that I have deep cause for thankfulness that things have ended thus—and sooner than I *once* thought possible—and that you have been preserved to me against so many adverse chances— I *could* feel very bitter—comfortless regret at having lost the precious intercourse of promised and increasing affection—and the sight of you—in your *girlish* beauty—which I might have had for three years back. Neither can I say to myself—as people commonly to—that 'all is for the best . . .'

. . . I hardly know *how* great a misfortune it may *yet* turn out to be—that I was not permitted to engage myself to you long ago—it would at any rate have saved me from much loss of health—a loss which I think it unlikely I shall ever altogether recover—and it would have given me two or three years of happiness—which—come what may now, are *lost for ever*—irremediably lost—and three years of human life—spent thus—or thus—in Paradise—or in thorny ground and barren—are something—humanly speaking— But divinely speaking—and in God's sight, they are *not*. They are *nothing*—and so I strive to consider them—first because it does no good now to regret them—secondly—because it is right and just so to think—and that was what I began to think—and that was what I began to meditate upon this morning after terminating my dance upon the top of the cliff—very seriously—and I was going to have taken up your denial of the propriety of my word 'scornful'—and tried whether I could not hold my own in that matter—and so I will, tomorrow—but I am at the end of my third sheet—and have been serious long enough— Only—whatever philosophy I may bring to my aid, of this severe and stoical kind—pray do you still maintain the other side of the question—and act as if I were no philosopher at all—by receiving me—that is—at Bowers Well as soon as you and Mama *possibly* can—and by naming a day as close as close

as can *possibly* be upon Easter Sunday. For you know my Father's birthday is the 10th of May, and we must—God willing—be at Denmark Hill for that.

Then we may stop in Switzerland—or go on to *Venice* if we like—I said I should be afraid—just as I said in almost my first letter that I would not take you abroad alone— The new happiness, new anxiety, —and excitement of travelling, are too much for most people—and in the course of my travelling on the continent I have heard—of oh—such and so many sad things happening on these bridal tours. Still if I find that I have my senses about me at all (which I do not think likely)—and that you are strong and well, I do not say I will not—but it will depend upon your feelings, and my Mother's advice. Mama's plans about Chamouni are just mine. You must always have a mule, and Coutet— Coutet is engaged already for the summer— Then I walk beside you—and we go to all manner of happy places— You could not go about without a mule—not but that there are some places where I hope to take you where you can't go *with* one—but not many. I am afraid my *high* climbing is over—I could not be happy now—even if I were not kept—as I shall be, by my love—to your side— I should now be nervous and fearful—for your sake—in places which I should have thought nothing of, last year—and when one is once nervous—*c'est fini*.—Besides I really should not like you to see me coming down from the high snows—my face *burned*, literally scarlet— You may well talk of the Kalydor—but it must be for *me* there—that it is wanted. Then the costume : Fancy—first—me with a huge pair of dark blue—double glassed—spectacles. Over these—over the whole face, a green gauze veil—doubled, and fastened down in the waistcoat— Then a broad straw hat on the top of all—tied tight down with its flaps *over the ears*—by a handkerchief over the crown of it—tied under the chin ! Many a hard days walk have I had—so accoutred—enough to frighten anything in the world but Alpine Sheep—whom nothing frightens— How pleased you will be the first time you see them trotting from far away over the snow to come to you and poke their noses into your hand.

What can keep you from sleeping my pet— All night—too ! Now pray—pray don't—it is very bad indeed of you—what are you so anxious about—one would think you were *miserable* at the thoughts of April. But do not write me long letters after sleepless nights—I don't know what you call rambling—I think you never wrote me such a sweet one—so close written too ! But don't—after these bad nights. If you go on that way—I shall come in March—! Send me the imitation Brussels lace, please. Love to poor little Alice ; tell her I hope she will soon be better.

Ever—dearest dearest Effie, My Effie :

—Your wearying—happy—devoted servant,

J. RUSKIN.

DENMARK HILL

(Dec. 15th, 1847)

... And so poor Harvey Duncan is really gone.—Now are you not a terrible creature, Effie—to serve Aunt Jessie's three brothers so—one after another— Kill them off by computation!— I don't know anything dreadful enough to liken you to— You are like a sweet forest of pleasant glades and whispering branches—where people wander on and on in its playing shadows they know not how far—and when they come near the centre of it, it is all cold and impenetrable—and when they would fain turn, lo—they are hedged with briars and thorns and cannot escape, but all torn and bleeding— You are like a wrecker on a rocky coast—luring vessels to their fate— Every flower that you set in your hair—every smile that you bestow—nay—every gentle frown even—is a false light lighted on the misty coast of a merciless gulph— Once let the ships get fairly *embayed* and they are all to pieces in no time— You are like a fair mirage in the desert—which people follow with weary feet and longing eyes—until they faint on the burning sands—or come to some dark salt lake of tears— You are like the bright—soft—swelling—lovely fields of a high glacier covered with fresh morning snow—which is heavenly to the eye—and soft and winning on the foot—but beneath, there are winding clefts and dark places in its cold—cold ice—where men fall, and rise not again— And then you say you 'don't know how it is—' No—there's the dreadfulfulness of it,—there's the danger— Ah, Effie—you have such sad, wicked ways without knowing it— Such sweet silver under-tones of innocent voice—that when one hears, one is lost—such slight—short—inevitable—arrowy glances from under the bent eyelashes—such gentle changes of sunny and shadowy expression about the lovely lips—such *desperate* ways of doing the most innocent things—Mercy on us—to hear you ask anybody 'whether they take sugar with their peaches'?—don't you recollect my being 'temporarily insane' for all the day afterwards—after hearing you ask such a thing—and then all *that* is the least of it—but you are such a good girl, too—and so sorry for all the harm you do—and so ready to like everybody, in reason,—and so surprised when you find they don't understand reason—and so ready to promise after you've half-killed them or driven them mad, that if they won't mind that *once*, you 'won't do it again,' and so everything that you ought to be, and can be—, that I think you ought to be shut up in an iron cage—or in one of those things which you have got in the Perth Tolbooth—and not allowed to speak to or see anybody—until you are married. A strict convent might do—bye-the-bye—if there are any near Perth. Evening. Thursday.—I should have written more to you to-day—but—as usual was interrupted. Lord Stavordale and Simeon, the M.P. for the Isle of Wight came in—I was out when they

came—but they got in, and when I came back—Stavordale had got all the pictures down and was lecturing upon them like myself—I thought of you—a *little*, as I was putting them up again.

I have been trying to find mama's book—and putting my book-case in order to-day,—not much done—nor anything found, yet—but I find myself sadly *put out* by my new plans, Effie—I don't exactly know where I am to live, now—and what books are to go to the furnished house—or what is worth while to do here—I know not—I wanted you so, to help me— Certainly I have not room here for half my things—unless you can show me some better way of keeping them. I am always going to be orderly, some day—when I am 'older and wiser'—for, though you reject with so much scorn the idea of ever being either the one or the other, I can't help admitting the probability of the first—and expediency of the second. I feel just about as I ought to have felt at 18. If I didn't know how old I was, I should guess that— Ah—my dear Effie—you say we can't expect to be always taken care of—I know we can't—and that's just why I want to be, while we *can*. It is *so* nice, Effie, not to have to take care of oneself.

* * * * *

DENMARK HILL

(Jan. 3, 1848)

MY DEAREST EFFIE

Yes—only *one* whole month between us now. I begin to feel quite frightened, like Sinbad the Sailor when his ship was drawing nearer and nearer to the loadstone mountain—I hope you will not pull my bolts out—Effie—Love does such things sometimes—. As you say—your hand might conceivably be better; considered as an M.S. and notebook hand—and though I am the last in the world who has any business to talk about writing—yet, for that very reason, it may be in your power to do me much good service by writing legibly. I don't think Alison ever intentionally exaggerates, but he is sometimes bombastic. 'Patient determination prevailed over enthusiastic valour'—is to be translated into—'The men who would have run away, if they could, thought they had better stand still—and the enemy, who came on at a great rate—because they expected them to run away,—when they found they didn't—ran away themselves.' That is the usual state of the case in all battles—and so with other forms of historical narration. He is inaccurate very often—but I believe quite as accurate as anybody else—who professes to give details of affairs which couldn't be seen for smoke.

But I never answered your yesterday's letter, about friends. Seriously, my love—I will grudge you *no* good friends: and I am really glad you have so affectionate a heart, but I must warn you against admitting the advances of every one who 'desires your further

acquaintance'— Hundreds of people who have nothing to do but to amuse themselves—and can't do it—will be glad of your cheerful society and others—out of mere idleness and curiosity—desire to know *me*—and to talk nonsense about art—or pass their heavy time over my pictures—or sketches. Against their inroads nothing but the most *rude* firmness protects me—and the people who cannot get at me otherwise—will try to do so through you. I find myself so well and happy when I am quiet, and so miserable in general society that you will have to be very cautious as to the kind of persons and number, whom you admit to terms of familiarity— All this however we can talk over at our leisure—but in the meantime—don't make your heart a lodging house for every stray comer who will pay their twopenny worth of fair speech—else I shall have to come and cut the 'twopenny rope'—and let them down anything but easily. (You know in the London old lodging houses the beds were hammocks—on ropes which were let go every morning at 6.)—but rather arrange your guests on the reformed lodging house principles—about which you can ask your Uncle Andrew—and have them in good order and give them fair entertainment—for indeed—if you don't look to it—your heart will soon be a mere caravanserai—or posada—where there is such a crowd, and it is so hot, that it is better to sleep out o' doors— And you know my love—that you said you liked to be called a Phoenix, but you must remember that there was but *one* Phoenix at once—whereas—if you bring your Friends upon me by Forty at a time—I shall be compelled to liken you rather to a Crane—who leads a Triangle with an illimitable base,—of Cranes behind her—so—or perhaps I shall begin to think myself Alibaba—with a multiplying mirror among the Forty Thieves—or perhaps I shall be reminded rather of Milton's 'locusts warping on the eastern wind'—and shall come home some day expecting something nice for dinner—and a quiet chat across the table—and find six and twenty cousins or so in the pantry—and everything eaten up, and shall be obliged to see if I can live like Mr. Jingle, on a pair of boots and a silk umbrella with an ivory handle! Or if I am reduced—as it seems likely—to live in the Cupboard—for the sake of a quiet life—on the top shelf;—after the Cousins have emptied the dishes—licked the plates—and scraped the saucepans, you will—like old Mother Hubbard—come to the Cupboard—to give poor Johnny a *bone*!

* * * * *

DENMARK HILL

(Feb. 23, 1848)

MY DEAREST LOVE,

Your little queer note of this morning—though a very sweet and kind one, has again made me anxious, and my mother, to whom I

read part of it, fears also that you may bring on illness by over labour or over excitement. It is quite natural that at present you should feel yourself losing something of your youthful spirit—and that the care—fear—and feeling by which you must be oppressed—of an acute and varying—often contradictory kind, should leave you sometimes despondent—often outwearied and weak. I trust this will all soon cease—and that the spring and healthy flow of spirit will return.—There is a time indeed—when, when the lustre of youth fades from the heart for ever—and the whole world becomes one of reality instead of imagination—but this did not take place with me till I was six or seven and twenty, I hope it will not with you—till even later—as your mind is altogether more healthily constituted than mine. But above all things—do not begin thinking about whether you deserve to be loved or not—nor encourage any of the morbid phases of modesty and self depreciation—I have suffered much from such feelings—because my heart is not large—and my vanity extreme—while I have enough sense to know what I am, and am not.—But you have too much affection—and too little pride—ever to make your happiness depend on what is thought of you by others,—except only by those whose love you will always have—and *feel* that you have. But—my dearest Effie—I do think that ever since you left us last summer—you have been managing yourself *very* ill—and I think it a little hard that your father and mother should always lay all the blame on your writing to me.—Whether, as at first—you desired to turn your thoughts away from subjects that had agitated you—or whether—as has been the case since October, you wished to preserve a tranquil and healthful state of mind in circumstances necessarily giving rise to anxiety and excitement—in either case, your best conduct would have been a return—as far as might be—to a schoolgirl's life—of early hours—regular exercise—childish recreation—and mental labour of a *dull* and *unexciting* character. I believe whatever the disposition or habits may be—this would be agreed on all hands—by the wisest and most experienced, to be the safest plan—and that the excitement of society—or of music—and far more,—anxiety as to things to be *done* and *planned*, were in the last degree objectionable.—Now—you know—in the mineral room—the last thing before you went away—I mentioned French Italian and Botany as subjects—two of which it was necessary and the other expedient—that you should learn—and I thought that you would endeavour to occupy your mind—and—(forgive me the impertinence) to please *me*—by giving some time each day to these healthful and unexciting studies.

Now, love, I know that it has not been possible for you to do this—. I know you have had much to do—much to think of; still—your Father and Mother might remember that since we have been engaged—and of course—before that—(June 15th—now eight months)—you

have not—so far as I know—except the writing of this last piece of French and the reading the *Misanthrope*—done anything for me or with reference to my wishes—except only the writing of your letters.

Now even this last—I should not have permitted—as I grant it not to be a healthy occupation—had not I felt—and your father himself admitted—that this was one of the points of your education which had been least regarded.—I wished you to be able—as every lady ought—to write easily and gracefully—and I thought the writing to me likely to give you easier and happier practice than you could have hereafter. If I had seen appearances of labour, or effort—about your letters—I should have checked them— But they have all been written easily and most of them rapidly—nor is the amount of writing (considerable I grant)—greater than should have been written at any rate as a mere exercise.

That you had a large correspondence besides—has not been my fault.—In my own case—I have written no longer each day than I usually do—but I have ceased writing to my friends for the present—offended some—for whose offence I do not care—the good ones trust to my affection—and suppose there is reason for my silence. *You ought* to have done the same.

That you have had charge of an household—anxiety about your mother's health, agitation respecting your lovers—has all been unavoidable—but it has been most unfortunate— Had it been possible to have sent you back to school, among a number of companions of your own age—to have given you plenty to do—nothing to think of ;—a great deal of play—*thorough* play—and sent you to bed at nine o'clock every evening,—you would have had no feelings of age come upon you—nor any nervousness—nor any despondency—though you had written me a letter every day as long as your sash—.

But this could not be—and you have been doing and suffering partly of necessity—and partly through thoughtlessness—just everything in the world that you should not—*except* in this *one* matter of my letters— Music is perhaps of all things the worst for you just now—Playing to your father in the evening—or practising what is *tiresome* in the day, does no harm—but to sit down and make yourself miserable by playing in the minor key is so utterly useless—so absurd,—so wrong ; that if it were not that I am glad to find you not quite incapable of doing naughty things—I could find it in my heart to be quite angry—and I have no hesitation in replying to your final question—'Am I not a wicked creature'—that you certainly are a *naughty* one. I don't believe, myself, that the going to Edinburgh will do you much good—however—anything is better than the way you are going on now—and as to my letters—as I allow that they *do* add to the sum of what is mischievous—I would rather that you did not write me while you are at Edinburgh—except only to tell me of

your safe arrival and then perhaps one just before I come—I shall be less anxious if you don't write than if you do.

I have been with my mother today as far as our Chalk Pit—for the first time since I was there with you—I was very happy—how miserable I should have been, without the prospect of being soon with you—and never parting with you—

Goodbye—and *N.* for ever !

Ever, dearest—your devoted lover.

* * * * *

DENMARK HILL

(*March 13, 1848*)

I am *very* sorry my wicked letter made you sad—and yet selfishly glad I wrote it—and the naughty one before it too—since they have obtained for me two such lovely letters to conclude the sweet series which I have of gentle and forgiving and loving and rejoicing—and comforting expression of your kind heart—many a kiss have I given to the letter of Saturday—and a joyous evening I had. I could not get away—for we had company, but I stole a moment at the fireside in the dining-room, and saw the first page and those closing words—and if you could but have felt my poor heart leaping for joy— But I did not think the second letter so sad, neither ;—I was nervous and ill, certainly,—but you would not have had, if you had been here—to enter the lists with me—and fight *à l'outrance*—no, one little touch of the hand and whisper to the ear would have put all right—. But I like your plan very much—as a general one—and it will be much better than yielding to my mood—except only when I really want to talk to you about what distresses me—and to be a little pitied and adored—and then gaiety alone would not do. But I do not think you will often see me committing the sin of discontent—after I am with you. I may sometimes be mortified or vexed with myself—but I trust that my regrets of things quite past are now nearly at an end. If people do right they will never be but cheerful and I do hope to be enabled to do right—not absolutely of course—but in the main, right, hereafter. I am truly rejoiced to hear you are so happy, my love : and—don't think me vain—I suppose it to be because I am coming—. But you must not only be a very happy creature—but a very clever creature—or the old Judges would not give you whole hours of *tête-à-têtes*. Lady Trevelyan is very kind—not that I was not sure that everybody would love you and think well of you—still her saying that you were worthy of me is very delightful—because, you know, it is a compliment—(no—a testimony to us both, to me more than to you, far, but it is very kind of her too ; and I know no one—of whom I know so little, of whose friendship I am so desirous for you.

Thank you also again and again for the details about the marriage

—and I shall like to be surprised by your bridal dress better than if I knew it before, and I shall like something over silk better than silk alone, and a veil instead of the mere pendant headdress—and the rest all very nice—only I shall not see it half while we are being married—nor in the morning at all,—not that I shall look like a ghost, I hope, nor desperate—still, I shall be thinking of what I am promising to you, and not of your dress—and of what I am receiving in you—and in your heart—and perhaps I shall hardly be able to look at you at all. But you shall put it on again for me in the evening—will you not? when I can look at you as long as I please—or at least until I dare not look any longer for fear I should die of joy,—and then—or when I get frightened less you should disappear like the white lady of Avenel—I will—oh—I don't know what—and to think only six weeks today—and at this time—God granting it—you will be mine altogether—it is too much. I cannot at all thank you— I shall never be able to thank you for all you have said to me, dearest—much less for all that you are going to be to me. But what a frightful place to stop at—Berwick—the very saddest and darkest town I ever— But then I had just parted from you, and that was perhaps the reason Edinburgh looked so ill— Bye-the-bye—my last letter could not have been so sad, for there was all that defence of my L's in it—of which you say nothing—but I suppose you thought it a sad defence—and of a piece with the rest.

And now love—I have not another letter to write to you, I hope—for many a day to come— I wish this was a better letter—but I have had much to do today,—and a long talk with Caroline, besides, about *you* (she does not make me sad, now, but disputes with me delightfully—till we get quite noisy—I have heard nothing about her sisters yet) and so I have only time to say that I hope the next letter I write to my dearest Effie, how long time soever may intervene—will be more fond and kind—far, than any of these—and will have for its chief purpose to express my deep joy and gratitude, in and for the more than fulfilment of all my dearest hopes: and the possession of far more than ever I hoped—though I seem to hope—yes—and to believe of you everything that is pure and lovely, and as your own *Changeless* name signifies—of good report—and if there be any virtue and if there be any praise—I think of it as in you—Ever—my dearest—and for ever—Your faithful and entirely devoted lover—servant—and soon, God Grant—your own husband—

John Ruskin and Euphemia Gray were married in the small drawing-room of the bride's home at Bowerswell near Perth on April 10th, 1848.

(In the Spring issue of the CORNHILL we hope to print further extracts from the Ruskin-Gray papers)

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MONASTERY KEEP WITH DRAWBRIDGE

Monasteries in the Sand

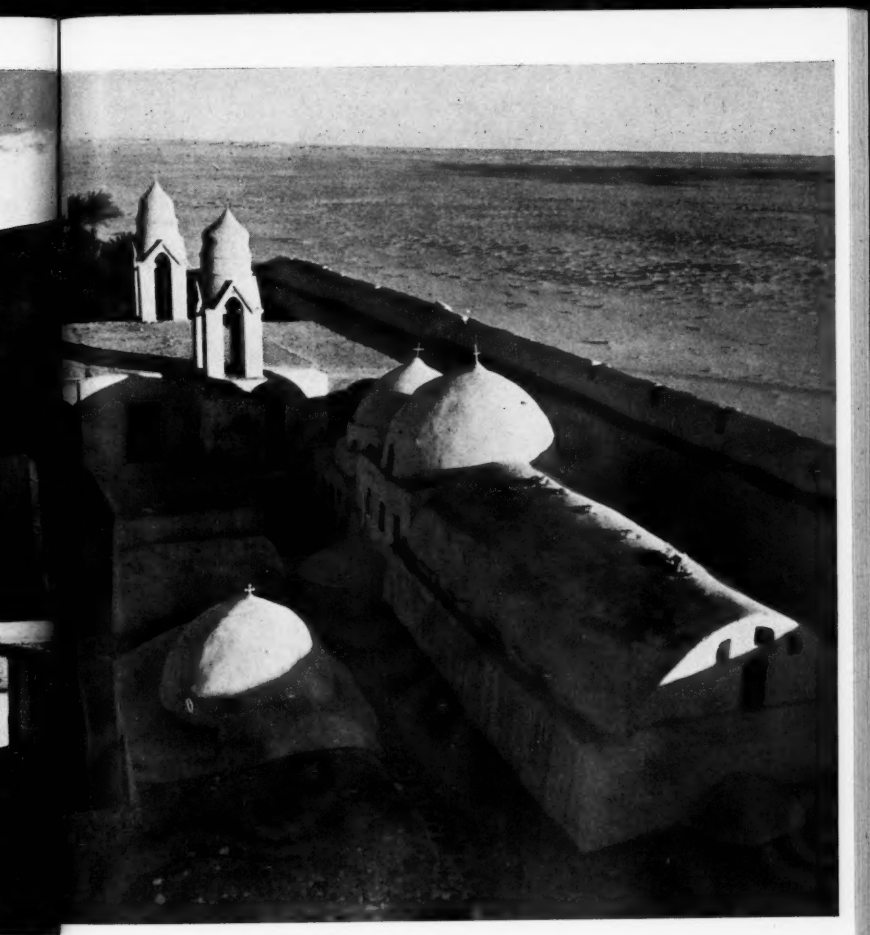
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ST. ANTHONY'S MONASTERY

MASTER



MONASTERY IN THE WADI NATRUN



DEIR SIMAN AND DEIR BARAMUS : MONASTERIES OF THE WADI NATRUN

Monasteries in the Sand

BY ROBIN FEDDEN

Of the fevers which impel human beings to unpredictable action, few have been more violent and sudden than that which swept the Nile valley in the second half of the third century A.D. It came upon the peasants almost overnight. Where at evening the family circle had been complete, morning revealed a break; a father or a brother had disappeared; sometimes even children were missing. There was no one to take the buffalo down to the river, no one to bring in the ripe melons or the waiting crop. The gaps were hard to fill, and as painful as if made by the bacterial fevers from which these people had always suffered. Every household was touched. As the valley emptied, the deserts filled; especially the barren mountainous deserts leading east to the Red Sea. In this inhospitable country where the strata are as capricious and fluctuating as the lines of a graph, and the *wadis* tell furious geological stories, there was no hole in the rock or earth, no twisted thorn or solitary palm, but sheltered a Nile peasant—a peasant turned anchorite. So many were these holy men that it came to be said with irony that in Egypt it was easier to find a monk than a man.

The importance of this queer exodus is immense. The fever of asceticism which drove the Nile dwellers into the deserts marked the beginning of Christian monasticism. From these first anchorites the rest—Benedictines, Carthusians, and perhaps even the later clerical orders—may be thought to have followed. The origins of the profound impulse which seized the Christian community of Egypt remain uncertain. A dualistic conception of the universe, that essential prerequisite to a life of religious asceticism, was, it is true, present in the faith of the Ancient Egyptians and dramatically concrete in the deadly struggle of Horus and Seth. Again there were the Essenes in Palestine. 'The philosophic eye of Pliny,' as Gibbon puts it, 'had surveyed with astonishment a solitary people who dwelt among the palm trees near the Dead Sea; who subsisted without money; who were propagated without women; and who derived from the disgust and repentance of mankind a perpetual supply of voluntary associates.' Though this curious sect had disappeared by A.D. 70, it is probable that their ideas gained a certain currency in Egypt through the Jews of Alexandria. Closer in time and place were the colonies of Egyptian *therapeutae*, seen and reported by Philo, who probably lasted until the beginning of the third century. Their lives were monastically strict, their fasts regular, and they met once a week (as did the first monastic bodies) for some sort of communal worship.

Such influences are not enough to establish an ascetic tradition. In the early church itself, though dualistic theories were rampant,¹ emphasis fell on social responsibility and there was little encouragement for the anchorite. The 'hermits' of the second century, as we are expressly told, mixed with their fellows and shared the community life. It is in fact impossible to say whence or why the ascetic fever came. There were of course contributory causes which intensified and determined the direction it took. First among these were the persecutions of Decian and Diocletian. The silence of the desert may have been welcome when the alternative was martyrdom. Again there was the decay of the Graeco-Roman world. For the townsman (though he was, it seems, in a minority among the anchorites), bemused by the complications of a vast cultural decadence, the bareness of the desert may not have appeared barren, may almost have offered, if he were tough enough for the flight, escape from issues that seemed insoluble.

One may wonder what would have been the outcome of this religious fever had it not been for 'the holy father, the star who gives light to all monks, the Great Anthony, whose equal has never existed.' As it was, this truly remarkable and simple man, for over eighty years living in the desert fastnesses, provided a focus for anchoritic enthusiasm and an example for the undisciplined peasant hermits. His prestige was immense—emperors wrote for his advice, and crowds came trekking out into the deserts to hear him speak—but it was no more remarkable than his personality. This personality the Legend of St. Anthony has obscured by over-emphasising his asceticisms and temptations—'the exact double of a woman' whom Satan (in vain) despatched to live with him in the deserts, and the cohorts of fearful animals that were unable to dismay him.² Though Anthony was indeed an uncompromising ascetic,³ it was not in maceration of the flesh that his wisdom and influence were exceptional. St. Jerome recounts the story of a man who lived for years in a hole on five figs a day, and many of the Nile peasants did almost as much. The saint's qualities lay elsewhere—in his magnetism, in his sympathetic understanding both of the problems of his time and of his fellow anchorites, and not least—as far as may be glimpsed through the mists of legend—in a profound and not ungenial humanity. Though the painters portray him stoic among frightful beasts, Athanasius,

¹ The Docetae in their conviction of the evil of matter went so far as to deny the reality of the body of Christ.

² One must, however, be thankful for these creatures who provided Bosch, Grunewald, Breughel, Schongauer, and other masters of the grotesque, with an inexhaustible source of inspiration.

³ He regarded it as a point of honour never to wash his feet. In his old age, when proceeding to Alexandria to refute the Arian heresy, it looked as though he would have to wade across one of the canals of the Nile Delta. In his embarrassment an angel came to his rescue and carried him across dryshod.

who knew him well, tells a story which is perhaps more revealing. The saint laboriously cultivated a small patch of wheat in his desert sanctuary which was repeatedly trampled by wild animals. Accordingly "one day when they were among the corn as was their custom, he went quietly and seized one of them, and he said unto them all with a laugh, 'Why do ye harm me seeing that I do no harm to you? Get ye gone therefore in the name of the Lord, and come ye never again nigh unto this place.' " They never did.

He was less successful in banishing the multitudes who flocked out into the deserts—sometimes a three days' journey by camel—to sit at his feet. Unable to disperse the admiring ascetics, he organised them. From the detailed instructions given to St. Macarius and other followers arose the first Christian monastic code. When he died at the age of a hundred and five, there were already a number of communities established observing the Antonian rule. This rule, as it crystallised in the latter part of the fourth century, showed certain marked characteristics. In the first place it was almost exclusively devotional. Intellectual, social, and educational activity—later so pronounced in the West—played little part in the life of the desert monks. Their role, as St. Jerome said, was 'not to teach but to weep.' The geographical situation of the first monasteries which placed them physically, as well as spiritually, outside the lay community, together with the fact that most of the peasant monks were devout but uneducated, contributed to this unitary insistence on prayer. The same things probably contributed to two other features of the rule almost as pronounced—its combative character, and its extreme ascetic strictness. The fourth century peasant believed the desert to be the natural home of the devils, as do the Egyptian peasants today; retirement therefore was in no sense a withdrawal; on the contrary the ascetic carried the cross into an enemy country. Not world weariness or the desire for peace, but the desire for more violent and exacting service was usually the spur felt by the Egyptian anchorite.¹

The ascetic strictness of the first monks is notorious and was no doubt excessive. The severity of their self-imposed rule seems appalling. Pleasure and guilt were from the first almost exactly synonymous. Long vigils, numberless prostrations, and the hair shirt, are all legacies of these early days.² The pathological element in this desert mortification is evident, and many of the anecdotes of the monks read like excerpts from psycho-analytical case-books. It is significant that the

¹ These anchorites would have been puzzled by the analytical psychologists who equate the retreat into the rigours and dangers of the desert with a desire to return to the quiet of the womb.

² So of course are many of the less austere features of monastic life. A universal tradition attributes to Anthony the adoption of the skull cap and the distinctive monastic habit that were later transported from Egypt to the West.

strain was often more than could be borne, and suicide, otherwise rare in the early church, appears to have been not infrequent among the younger monks. Though the humanist will wish to protest at such deformation,¹ it must be remembered that the successful ascetics, those who stood the test, gave currency through their very mode of life to the conception of the austere, unshakable, whitehaired hermit. This conception has ever since exerted a powerful force on moral and Christian thought.²

The Antonian rule represents a compromise between the solitary life of the anchorite and the closely knit cenobitic systems of the later European orders. It was an attempt to regulate and develop the practice of individual asceticism rather than to organise a complete community life. This accounts for the fact that, though obedience to the abbot was the keystone of the rule, the individual monk was left a good deal of liberty. He did not necessarily have to become a priest (there is no evidence to prove that St. Anthony himself was ever ordained), nor did he originally have to take a formal vow. On the rare occasions when a monk wished to marry or rejoin the world he was allowed to do so without let or scandal. It was only later, when the fever of asceticism was on the decline and the deserts became the resort of false penitents hoping to profit by the exemption from taxes granted to monks, that the rule was tightened and lost its attractive personal and self-interpreted character. By that time, however, it was no longer simply an Egyptian affair. The fever had spread from the Nile valley throughout the Christian World.

The pace at which the contagion moved is extraordinary. The first anchorite, St. Paul of Egypt, is said to have taken to the deserts in A.D. 250, and the first gathering of anchorites to form a tentative monastic community appears to have been organised by St. Anthony some fifty years later. Within a generation of his death (which took place in A.D. 359) the Antonian rule was fully developed, and the monasteries dotted all over Egypt were recognised institutions with an assured legal status and the power to own property as corporations. In the deserts of the Wadi Natrun alone, the monasteries housed five thousand monks, and St. Pachomius on an island near Thebes had gathered around himself another fourteen hundred. Eastward the rule penetrated into Syria with Saints Basil and Hilarion; Athanasius established it in Rome; and Martin of Tours carried the Egyptian asceticism into Gaul. Before long it crossed to Britain and it is said that two thousand Antonian monks were enrolled at Banchor.

¹ The protest has never been more forcibly made than by Lecky: 'A hideous, sordid, and emaciated maniac, . . . passing his life in a long routine of useless and atrocious self-torture, and quailing before the ghastly phantoms of his delirious brain, had become the ideal of the nations which had known the writings of Plato and Cicero and the lives of Socrates and Cato.'

² The conception is also said to have played its part in the development of the Catholic theory of free-will.

By 566 St. Columba reached Iona ; Egyptian influence could go no further.¹

When the desert tradition, after the reforms of St. Benedict, assumed a new shape in the West, asceticism in Egypt had already lost its first inspired violence. The passage of time and the heavy hand of Islam almost stopped the flow outward from the Nile valley. Recruits were few. The communities, which had once reckoned their numbers in hundreds and thousands, shrank with every generation. In the end a few dozen old men, tanned as the desert Beduin whom they hated and feared, were all the life that remained.

By contrast the monastery buildings, favoured by their isolation and a dry desert climate, suffered relatively little. Though the sand drifts against the walls and many of them are now half-empty, the great monasteries look much as they did a thousand years ago. In the Wadi Natrun three or four of them ride the undulating sand dunes like ships in a long swell, the only solid shadow-throwing objects in an indeterminate shifting landscape. Not far from the Red Sea, St. Anthony's own monastery lies under the stony palisades of the Gebel Gellala, a jagged naked range whose decent covering of earth was washed away ages ago. Nothing will root there, and only ibex, with hooves like iron, live on the mountain. In the past the trip to the desert monasteries was a laborious affair of camels ; to-day the Ford motorcar bumps you to them across sand and shingle. Fawn-coloured larks rise from the desert floor, and once in a while a portentous brown-necked raven flaps away. Only the fortunate now see gazelle.

The major monasteries of the desert, having known much the same history, and having shared much the same architectural evolution, create a very similar impression. As you approach, silence is the thing which first strikes you. Behind the walls you know there is a community, living men, and—conferring in these wastes a special distinction—running water. Yet no sound emerges. Wrapped in their ritual, their subdued methodic coming and going, the monks are sealed off from the surrounding deserts. Here is desert ; there, behind the walls, something quite different. Voices do not naturally carry from the one to the other. Even when you have clutched a bellrope and an explosive clanging shatters the silence, minutes elapse before a bearded face stares from the wall-top. The stranger in these spaces is viewed with suspicion. Hospitality has in the past cost the monks their lives, and Beduin received into the monasteries have betrayed and sacked them. Until fifty years ago the visitor was

¹ A curious feature in the spread of the movement is the number of mere boys who turned monk. It is interesting to discover that the influence and pressure of the mothers played a considerable part in these adolescent conversions to a life of chastity. They not only entered into correspondence with the monasteries and tried to convert their sons against their husbands' wishes, but actually had their sons abducted. This became so prevalent that St. Chrysostom apparently wrote a work of consolation for fathers whose sons were thus enticed away.

hauled up in a basket, but today, if your business and credentials are clear, a heavy door will eventually swing open and you will pass in on foot. A first and inescapable duty is the exchange of courtesies with the abbot, often prolonged and wearisome for both parties. Only when coffee and conversation are over will you be free to look around.

The most immediately impressive feature of the monasteries is certainly the towering walls, sometimes ten or twelve metres high, which protect and enclose the buildings and gardens. In every case they were added long subsequent to the foundation of the monasteries, and became necessary only when the end of the Roman peace and the disappearance of the Roman camel corps made plundering tribesmen free of the desert. They are surmounted by a *chemin de ronde*, with a protective parapet, from which until yesterday the monks might detect at a distance the approach of marauding Arabs. None now stand as they were built in the first millenium. Constructed usually of plastered brick, they have been breached again and again. Successive generations of monks have patched or extended them.

These walls possess often but a single gateway, and this usually of recent date, since in the past goods, as well as men, were for prudence sake hauled up by windlass. These windlasses still serve to raise the supplies of corn which come on camelback from the Nile valley, and to lower the daily distribution of unleavened bread which the indigent Beduin come to beg, a charity which was once, it seems, a tribute.

Within the walls, and considerably antedating them, a keep is always to be found. These keeps, built from the fourth century onwards, are approached by a rude wooden drawbridge from the flat roof of a neighbouring building. They long served a dual purpose: as repositories for treasure, and as safe retreats in time of danger. First among the treasures of the monasteries were, and are, their libraries. The ascetics were conscientious and exact copyists, and they brought with them into the deserts the same painstaking craftsmanship that redeems much of the uninspired art of Ancient Egypt. Their labours preserved manuscripts which would otherwise have been lost, and it is characteristic of the nature of early asceticism in Egypt, whose recruits came largely from the peasants, that scholarship owes a debt to their hands rather than to their minds. The libraries of the desert monasteries long ago excited the interest, and taxed the honesty, of western bibliophiles. Vansleb collecting for Louis XIV visited the monasteries in the sixteen seventies, and Assemani, the great Syrian scholar and Vatican librarian, secured a rare haul in the 'middle of the succeeding century. Many others followed—Curzon among them—with the result that the monks are today extremely unwilling to show their depleted libraries to the stranger.

Most of the monasteries possess at least two churches and these do not differ much in style from the ecclesiastical architecture of the Nile valley. They are simple unassuming buildings often constructed of brick. The chief feature of interest is usually the carved-wood screen, sometimes inlaid with ivory in the Coptic manner, and hung with ikons. A few churches also retain traces of wall paintings dating apparently from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. Not infrequently the churches represent a compromise between a basilican and a domed Byzantine building, though undoubtedly the commonest type of desert church consists simply of nine or twelve domes of equal size set on piers or pillars covering a square apseless building. When one dome is larger than the others it is commonly found at the east end over the chief sanctuary—there are always three sanctuaries in these Coptic churches—and not in the centre of the church as would be the case in Byzantine architecture. This disposition of a larger dome—when one exists—accounts for the fact that the desert churches are never cruciform. Not unexpectedly in a monastery, these churches have neither font nor baptistery, nor the galleries over the side aisles which in ordinary Coptic churches were reserved for the accommodation of women.

The monks have no dormitories, and even beds, in the common sense of the term, they do not use. Chrysalis-like they curl themselves in small cubby-holes where a minimum of comfort is not easily found. These cells, though they hardly deserve even so modest a name, commonly open, not into the interior of a building, but directly out of doors. Thus they reproduce as far as possible, both in their dimensions and exposure, the caves and hovels in which the first anchorites found shelter from the desert sun. The lives which the monks lead in these cramped quarters and within the larger compass of the monastery have altered little since the fifth century. The *tau*, St. Anthony's queer T-shaped crutch, is still used by the older monks to enable them to support the fatigue of their long services, and the ardent still wear the hair shirt.¹ The night office begins about four a.m.; their mornings they devote to manual work; the single daily meal, strictly vegetarian, is eaten in solitude in the cells at three in the afternoon; vespers come with sunset. On Sundays, as was always the case, there is some variation and a communal meal is taken in the refectory from which meat is not excluded.

The refectory is in most cases a long low vaulted room down whose length runs a rude table of masonry, wood being difficult to come by in the deserts. These rooms offer little attraction, and Vansleb's description of the refectory at St. Anthony's in the seven-

¹ In respect of dress the monks are now divided into three categories: those who wear the shirt; those who wear wool next the skin; and those who consult their own comfort.

teenth century—'un lieu fort sale et fort obscure'—is applicable to most of them today. The position and origin of the refectory in the desert monasteries is, however, curious. The communal Sunday meal, or *agape*, to which reference has been made, was until the end of the fourth century actually eaten in the church itself, and had both a nutritive and a sacramental aspect. When this practice lapsed and proper refectories were built, they retained a semi-sacred character, and, being regarded as almost part of the church, were usually situated as close as possible to the west end.

For the stranger who steps into these monasteries from the blinding glare of desert light, the green of the gardens is surprising and welcome. Each monastery has of necessity a spring, and it was the water which drew the first ascetics to these sites. In a country where little flourishes, the monks are able to cultivate every kind of fruit tree, and palms and churches are intermingled. At St. Anthony's under the beetling cliffs of the Gellala the green seems particularly luxuriant, and there are healthy vines from which the monks make an acrid white wine, palatable enough in that parched region. Excepting corn which came by caravan from the Nile, the monasteries were for centuries largely self-supporting. They could be so owing to their gardens. From the palm fibre, mats were woven; from sesame, oil was crushed; and from the cultivated plots came the little sustenance necessary to keep the holy men alive. Green gardens and the practice of asceticism, so unlikely a combination, have been in Egypt indissolubly associated. Birds are to be found singing in the desert in those places where monks pray.

A Henry James Jubilee

BY S. GORLEY PUTT

I

The world was in no fit frame of mind, on April 15th, 1943, to pay tribute, save in the most perfunctory fashion, to the memory of Henry James, who had been born on that date one hundred years previously. So James, who died in the midst of the first World War (barely a month later receiving the Order of Merit from the sovereign whose subject he became in 1915), had his centenary celebrations minimised by the second, although during its long progress the steady disappearance of his books from the second-hand bookshops indicated that he has at last achieved what he so bitterly missed during his lifetime: a numerous and appreciative audience. As a propagandist for James, it has always seemed to me likely that new readers are more easily to be won for his early masterpieces than (at first brush at least) for the famous three long last novels.¹ It is as *parti pris*, then, that I welcome an opportunity mildly to celebrate the jubilee of two serene masterpieces of his early maturity: *The Princess Casamassima* and *The Bostonians*, both published in book form in 1886 after serial publication the previous year. Only the prodigious later output of this author should even now mitigate, in these days of one-book reputations and elephantine gestation, the astonishment aroused by the issue in one year of two such distinguished novels (700 and 550 pages respectively in the Macmillan pocket edition)—and a glance at his bibliography reveals no trace of fallow period or exhausted soil in the years immediately preceding and following this bumper harvest.

There was no flagging, but there was a pained incredulous disappointment at their failure to make any impression on critics or general readers. 'I am still staggering a good deal,' he wrote² to W. D. Howells on January 2nd, 1888, 'under the mysterious and (to me) inexplicable injury wrought—apparently—upon my situation by my last two novels, *The Bostonians* and *The Princess*, from which I expected so much and derived so little. They have reduced the desire, and the demand, for my productions to zero. . . .'³ Twenty years later the disappointment was still fresh and still inexplicable; writing³ to Howells on August 17th, 1908, he mentions his desire to revise and re-issue *The Bostonians* in the New York Edition, referring

¹ A view supported in a brilliant assessment of Henry James by Dr. F. R. Leavis (*Scrutiny*, Vol. V, No. 4). Of *The Bostonians* and two other early novels he writes: 'All these have the abundant, full-blooded life of well-nourished organisms.'

² *The Letters of Henry James*, edited by Percy Lubbock. Vol. I, p. 135.

³ *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 100.

to the book as 'tolerably full and good,' and admits that it had never, 'even to my much-disciplined patience, received any sort of justice.' A study of Henry James's progressively resigned dejection at never being rewarded by public enjoyment of his superb gallery of created characters or understanding critical appreciation of his artistic aims, would make an essay by itself—there would be plenty of texts in his letters and Prefaces, and a number of wry comments in the novels themselves. Here, it is only necessary to record, in a proper spirit of gratitude, that the cool reception afforded to his twin offerings in 1886 hurt but did not daunt him. In the first of the letters to Howells quoted above, he continues:

However, I don't despair, for I think I am now really in better form than I have ever been in my life, and I propose yet to do many things. Very likely too, some day, all my buried prose will kick off its various tombstones at once. Therefore don't betray me till I myself have given up. That won't be for a long time yet.

He held manfully to his own view of these two novels. Of *The Bostonians* he wrote¹ to his brother William on February 14th, 1885, in a letter to which we shall return later in this essay, 'the story is I think, the best fiction I have written.' As for *The Princess Casamassima*, it is included in the first of two 'short lists' of his novels, provided² on September 14th, 1913, for the benefit of a young aspirant: its companions in the list 'not to be missed' being *Roderick Hudson*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl*.

II

The Princess Casamassima has, as a skeletal plot, a tale of metropolitan revolutionaries and the struggle to right the wrongs of the down-trodden, but, as Dr. Leavis observes, the novel brings 'little comfort to those who would like to justify James by his interest in the class-war.' Noting the 'earthy and sappy vitality' of the book, the same critic suggests that it derives, significantly, from a literary source—Dickens. Now, it would be unwise to discountenance that suggestion altogether, for there is ample evidence of James's habit of seeing the 'real' world through the derived world of art, and he has himself told us in *A Small Boy and Others* (the first of three autobiographical volumes) that as a child he would creep to a corner of the room, hidden behind a screen or table-cloth, to drink in enjoyment as a cousin read aloud to his mother the first instalments of *David Copperfield*. It is true, too, that on his first childhood view of London he found it 'extraordinarily the picture and the scene of Dickens, now so changed and superseded,' and later recalls³ his horrified fascination when, from the safe interior

¹ *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 117.

² *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 333.

³ *A Small Boy and Others*, Ch. XXII.

of an early Victorian four-wheeler, he watched 'swarming crowds . . . of figures reminding me of George Cruikshank's Artful Dodger and his Bill Sykes and his Nancy,' figures looming suddenly in 'gas-lit patches . . . culminating, somewhere far to the west, in the vivid picture, framed by the cab-window, of a woman reeling backward as a man felled her to the ground with a blow in the face.' The childhood Dickensian view we may well accept, but James's mature view of London was entirely his own, and his view of its 'characters' went far beyond Dickensian caricature. This is made conveniently explicit in one of his generous letters to the young Mr. H. G. Wells. Praising that author's *Kipps* in a letter dated November 19th, 1905, he writes :¹

You have for the very first time treated the English 'lower middle' class, etc., without the picturesque, the grotesque, the fantastic and romantic interference of which Dickens, e.g., is so misleadingly, of which even George Eliot is so deviatingly, full.

'The very first time' is a phrase generous indeed : *The Princess Casamassima* pre-dated *Kipps* by some twenty years.

No ; the source is not Dickens but Henry James's own endless capacity for warm-hearted observation. He has told us so, *tout simple*, in the Preface :

The simplest account of the origin of *The Princess Casamassima* is, I think, that this fiction proceeded quite directly, during the first year of a long residence in London, from the habit and interest of walking the streets . . . the prime idea was unmistakeably the ripe round fruit of perambulation.

So it was that little Hyacinth Robinson 'sprang up for me out of the London pavement'—not from Dickens, and still less from any narrow or preconceived notion of social distinctions tinged by moral indignation.

It is, indeed, precisely on the ground that James's young hero was *not* Dickensian that some critics seem to be annoyed. Mr. Van Wyck Brooks, for example, quotes with almost malicious vexation the young lad's habit of 'letting his imagination wander among the haunts of the aristocracy,' a habit which he attributes solely to James's superstitious reverence for the 'noble blood' flowing in the poor young book-binder's illegitimate veins. 'In real life,' cries the outraged Mr. Brooks² from the realistic side of the Atlantic (he cannot forgive James for leaving it), 'the last thing that would have occurred to a young man in Hyacinth's position would have been to "roam and wander and yearn" about the gates of that lost paradise : he would have gone to Australia, or vanished into the slums, or continued with the utmost indifference at his trade of binding books.' That

¹ *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 40.

² *The Pilgrimage of Henry James* (1928), p. 82.

may be indeed what he *should* have done, according to the set social tenets of Boston. Henry James knew better. He knew that the imagination of a child is not bounded by a nice sense of social status or republican zeal. He had only to recall his own childhood dreams, in far-off New York, over 'the full entrancing folios of Nash's lithographed *Mansions of England in the Olden Times*¹—another habit frowned upon by the incorruptible Mr. Brooks. Mr. Stephen Spender² goes one better in high-minded indignation and suggests that Hyacinth Robinson 'might to-day have become a socialist Prime Minister: a Ramsay MacDonald, who, at the height of his power, would dismay his followers by going over to the other side and becoming the most frequent of visitors at large country houses and of dinners at Buckingham Palace.'

How wilfully irrelevant are these black-and-white political judgments in the face of Hyacinth's bewilderment between private dreams and public sympathies would, one might have supposed, have been obvious to their sensitive perpetrators. It is the bewilderment, to quote the Preface again, that supplies the very germ and human quality of the novel; to read it as a political tract is to miss the whole meaning. As James admits, with that rueful cynicism which colours so many of the Prefaces:

the wary reader for the most part warns the novelist against making his characters too *interpretative* of the muddle of fate, or in other words too divinely, too priggishly clever. 'Give us plenty of bewilderment,' this monitor seems to say, 'so long as there is plenty of slashing out in the bewilderment too. But don't, we beseech you, give us too much intelligence; for intelligence—well, *endangers*; *endangers* not perhaps the slasher himself, but the very slashing, the subject-matter of any self-respecting story. It opens up too many considerations, possibilities, issues; it *may* lead the slasher into dreary realms where slashing somehow fails and falls to the ground.'

When Hyacinth 'wanted to drive in every carriage, to mount on every horse, to feel on his arm the hand of every pretty woman in the place,' and felt bitter when 'these familiar phenomena became symbolic, insolent, defiant, took upon themselves to make him smart with the sense that *he* was out of it,' it may be objected by unfriendly critics that the young man is suffering from delusions of grandeur. To which the answer is, of course, that some young men *do* suffer from delusions of grandeur (I have seen no pious outcry against *The Bulpington of Blup*, in which Mr. Wells gave us a full-scale study of the disease), and that it is the novelist's job to describe people as they are and not clean types from a Marx-cum-Freud textbook. Moreover, the reader's indignation against social injustice is in fact more easily aroused by

¹ *A Small Boy and Others*, Ch. II.

² In the Henry James number of *Hound and Horn*, April-June, 1934.

young Robinson's hurtful dreams than by his more overt ('Dickensian,' if you like) references :

... but a breath of popular passion had passed over him, and he seemed to see, immensely magnified, the monstrosity of the great ulcers and sores of London—the sick, eternal misery crying, in the darkness, in vain, confronted with granaries and treasure-houses and palaces of delight where shameless satiety kept guard.

It seemed to me worth while protesting against these somewhat inhuman assessments of *The Princess Casamassima* because the novel is admittedly 'political' in plot and background, and when Miss Rebecca West complains¹ that James 'produced a picture-gallery when he had intended a grave study of social differences,' she makes a good point but with—I feel—the wrong emphasis. Let a man be never so deeply involved in political theory (and Hyacinth Robinson was not *deeply* involved, as we shall see), he will nevertheless see most clearly—if he has any eyes at all—the people among whom he lives and works ; for political theory is something added to the normal human equipment and not something substituted in its place. It is indeed an additional merit in the novel that James has defined for his chief character, mainly by a superb series of portraits of various types of revolutionary zealot, a highly complex attitude towards politics. But this 'political' success, however indicative of a mature deftness of touch, is subordinate to the overall portrait of the whole humanity of his hero. No one can complain that Henry James, in the early novels at least, was not almost over-helpful in supplying guides for the reader ; even if we had missed the pervasive tone and obvious point of stress, there are signposts in plenty. Here is one :

For this unfortunate but remarkably organised youth, every displeasure or gratification of the visual scene coloured his whole mind, and though he lived in Pentonville and worked in Soho, though he was poor and obscure and cramped and full of unattainable desires, it may be said of him that what was most important in life for him was simply his impressions.

The opening chapters put us at once in possession, with rich and beautiful economy, of the 'private' and 'public' impressions of the boy. He is being brought up by Miss Pynsent, his dear 'Pinnie,' a little dressmaker of modest means who lives with simple decorum in a decayed neighbourhood. She is as "lower middle" class, etc.' as you could wish, but James is hardly so insensitive as to set that particular placard over her devoted head. Instead, by a hundred kindly touches her portrait is built up for us, each touch adding something to the mixture of love and squeamish sense of the sordid which

¹ *Henry James* (1916), p. 78.

grew up side by side in the mind of her sensitive young *protégé*. Three illustrative snippets must suffice :

Miss Pynsent could not embrace the state of mind of people who didn't apologise, though she vaguely envied and admired it, she herself spending much of her time in making excuses for obnoxious acts she had not committed.

Miss Pynsent esteemed people in proportion to their success in constituting a family circle—in cases, that is, where the materials were under their hand. This success, among the various members of the house of Henning, had been of the scantiest, and the domestic broils in the establishment adjacent to her own, whose vicissitudes she was able to follow, as she sat at her window at work, by simply inclining an ear to the thin partition behind her—these scenes, amid which the crash of crockery and the imprecations of the wounded were frequently audible, had long been the scandal of a humble but harmonious neighbourhood.

Though it was already November there was no fire in the neatly-kept grate beneath the chimney-piece, on which a design, partly architectural, partly botanical, executed in the hair of Miss Pynsent's parents, was flanked by a pair of vases, under glass, containing muslin flowers.

This last passage reminds me forcibly of Mr. T. S. Eliot's poem *A Cooking Egg*, and I wonder how it is that the indulgent sarcastic inflation has been so rightly appreciated in the one American-born English author, and so signally missed in the other. Listen to the echo of Miss Pynsent in the more austere notes of Mr. Eliot on Pipit :

Pipit sate upright in her chair
Some distance from where I was sitting ;
Views of the Oxford Colleges
Lay on the table, with the knitting.

Daguerreotypes and silhouettes,
Her grandfather and great-great-aunts,
Supported on the mantelpiece
An Invitation to the Dance.

But where is the penny world I bought
To eat with Pipit behind the screen ?
The red-eyed scavengers are creeping
From Kentish Town and Golders Green ;
Where are the eagles and the trumpets ?

'Where are the eagles and the trumpets ?' is precisely what Hyacinth asked of his own Pipit, and asked in vain. He, too, turned to the

'weeping, weeping multitudes' drooping in the Victorian equivalents of 'a hundred A.B.C.s,' and found among them first his fellow outcasts, then came to share their political attitudes, and finally died in the attempt to overthrow, in the interests of the weeping multitudes, the eagles and trumpets he so pathetically craved for himself.

The little boy's first view of social injustice (other than the undeserved straitness of poor Pinnie's circumstances) is described in a harrowing melodramatic scene; he is conducted to the prison where his mother lies dying. He is unaware that the gaunt foreign slattern is his mother, a French girl who had served a life-sentence for the murder of her lover (Hyacinth's unknown father), a mysterious 'Lord Frederick.' The scene is grim, ghoulish; dramatic ironies are piled as thick as one could wish, as when a fearful Mrs. Bowerbank, embodying Victorian morality, asks:

Is there nothing the little gentleman would like to say, now, to the unfortunate? Hasn't he any pleasant remark to make to her about his coming so far to see her when she's so sunk? It isn't often that children are shown over the place (as the little man has been) and there's many that'd think themselves lucky if they could see what he has seen.'

'Mon pauvre joujou, mon pauvre chéri,' the prisoner went on in her tender tragic whisper . . .

The scene may indeed be Dickensian in treatment, but I think we can trace its germ not to any bookish memory, but to that grim little scene in *A Small Boy and Others* (Chapter XIII) describing the impressions crowding in on the young Henry James when he himself was taken on a childhood visit to Sing-Sing.

The development of Hyacinth's political attitude (it is one of Henry James's better jokes in the absurd Proustian category of joke, by the way, that the lad had no objection to his name, considering it to be quite masculine so long as it was not pronounced in the *French* fashion!) is illustrated almost entirely by means of the 'portrait gallery' to which Miss West takes exception. To indicate something of the functional significance of these portraits as well as their serene beauty as examples of portrait painting it will be necessary to offer a fair number of quotations. Each example could be multiplied over and over again, so that what may appear to be prodigality of selection is in fact a meagre sample compelled by the most strenuous efforts of wilful parsimony. It may be useful, first, to enumerate these characters as functional 'types' surrounding and vitalising the figure of Hyacinth, before noting in how much more lively a form than 'types' they are in fact created. Millicent Henning, a warm-hearted vulgar girl, Miss Pynsent's nearest neighbour, who feels her excluded social status not at all, but glows with the life of her own rampageous London and runs after the nobs, beaming with health and strength,

for all she is worth—and for all *they* are worth ; Anastasius Vetch, a gentle old fiddler equally content to espouse an old-fashioned Radical philosophy or to take tea with Miss Pynsent, and ever prompt to aid the young man whose genius he recognises more clearly than do any of the more ' intellectual ' characters ; Eustache Poupin who represents and reflects in an equally sedentary fashion the fire of the Paris Commune and who longs somewhat passively for the brotherhood of man ; Paul Muniment, Hyacinth's contemporary, a young London Socialist of clear sight and hard head and a vivid incorruptibility which is in the event far more corruptible than Hyacinth's own second-hand resolves ; his sister, Rose Muniment, a bed-ridden cripple nauseatingly *au fait* with the affairs of the titled folk whom she affects to patronise ; Lady Aurora Langrish, a self-conscious and wondrously sympathetic Lady Bountiful figuring as the distressed conscience of her gilded class ; Captain Sholto, a hanger-on of that class who makes a much more effective alliance with the common folk via Millicent Henning ; Diedrich Hoffendahl, the genuine article behind real revolution and unliterary assassination ; and most seductive of all, the Princess Casamassima herself, who shares to a generous extent the hero's sensibility and who dramatises both him and herself in her own bored efforts to ' climb down ' as he, poor distracted fellow, is at once trying to climb up and, as it were, to blow up. A portrait gallery ? Yes—and *what* a portrait gallery ! Each figure positively alive, so that even if Miss West were right in supposing that they do not in sum help forward the ' grave study of social differences,' she is certainly right in praising them as portraits.

I believe, however, that if we look at them a little more closely we shall discover not only their liveliness but also their constructional effect, as each in turn illustrates one facet of the hero's ' bewilderment.' We must first recall, as of more importance perhaps than any member of the above list, the endearing figures of Pinnie, from whom, rather than from a shadowy melodramatic Lord Frederick, we may trace something of the quality of Hyacinth's Pentonville delicacy (a point, incidentally, which would have been perceived by Mr. Van Wyck Brooks if he had known his English social types half as well as Henry James knew *his*) :

His attention, however, was mainly given to Pinnie : he watched her jealously, to see whether, on this important occasion, she would not put forth a certain stiff, quaint, polished politeness, of which she possessed the secret and which made her resemble a pair of old-fashioned sugar-tongs.

As the plot unfolds itself, Hyacinth is called upon to invest emotional capital in very many contrasting human beings, but there is in his life no more genuine understanding than that existing between the prim dressmaker and her little waif. One slight passing comment

pierces to the heart of this relationship in that felicitous manner which marks Henry James as a psychological novelist of the first rank—that manner which, spurned by more confident but bogus members of the craft, seems indeed for so many readers to function not as a revelation but as an over-successful camouflage :

One of the things she loved him for, however, was that he gave you touching surprises in this line, had sudden inconsistencies of temper that were all for your advantage. He was by no means always mild when he ought to have been, but he was sometimes so when there was no obligation. At such moments Pinnie wanted to kiss him . . .

Hyacinth's upbringing unfits him for a genuine companionship with Millicent Henning, who played with him as a child and would gladly prolong their games beyond adolescence :

There were things in his heart and a hidden passion in his life which he should be glad enough to lay open to some woman . . . The answer was not in this loud, fresh laughing creature, whose sympathy couldn't have the fineness he was looking for, since her curiosity was vulgar. Hyacinth objected to the vulgar as much as Miss Pynsent herself ; in this respect she had long since discovered that he was after her own heart.

But he was grateful for Millicent's warmth of heart, and esteemed that quality even while acknowledging its physical basis. This is done with a wry twist significant of the early James : a single sentence which would have been expanded to a chapter in the later novels, in which the wryness might remain as a confusion in the reader's mind, but the direction of the twist be concealed except from the most assiduous scrutineer :

She was bold, and free, and generous, and if she was coarse she was neither false nor cruel. She laughed with the laugh of the people, and if you hit her hard enough she would cry with its tears.

If she had been ugly he couldn't have listened to her ; but her beauty glorified even her accent, intensified her cockney genius with prismatic hues, gave her a large and constant impunity.

'No one but a capital girl could give herself such airs,' Hyacinth remarks in a later generous mood ; it is refreshing to see how deeply his creator could appreciate common vitality, and the following paragraph provides a telling response to those who still maintain that Henry James did not like or understand ordinary common folk :

An inner sense told him that her mingled beauty and grossness, her vulgar vitality, the spirit of contradiction yet at the same time of attachment that was in her, had ended by making her indispensable to him. She bored him as much as she irritated him ; but if she was

full of execrable taste she was also full of life, and her rustlings and chatterings, her wonderful stories, her bad grammar and good health, her insatiable thirst, her shrewd perceptions and grotesque opinions, her mistakes and her felicities, were now all part of the familiar human sound of his little world.

Millicent, clearly, was hardly likely to encourage a young man to desperate deeds against society: she would always, in Spenderian analysis, vote solid Tory. Nor, for that matter, was the thoughtful reservation of Mr. Vetch—most congenial of the forces of discontent. He is prepared to play his fiddle in the capitalist theatre so long as he can think his private thoughts and indulge, in Pinnie's 'dismal, forsaken bower,' in 'so many sociable droppings-in and hot tumblers.' He voices very clearly one aspect of Hyacinth's inherent resistance to the revolutionary creed: 'The way certain classes arrogate to themselves the title of the people has never pleased me.' As for the gallant Monsieur Poupin, he is a retired and exiled member of the Old Guard who has already shot his bolt; his portrait is indeed a luxury, and a splendid example of the young novelist's high spirits:

M. Poupin was a socialist, which Anastasius Vetch was not, and a constructive democrat (instead of being a mere scoffer at effete things), and a theorist and an optimist and a visionary; he believed that the day was to come when all the nations of the earth would abolish their frontiers and armies and customs-houses, and embrace on both cheeks, and cover the globe with boulevards, radiating from Paris, where the human family would sit, in groups, at little tables, according to affinities, drinking coffee (not tea, *par exemple!*) and listening to the music of the spheres. Mr. Vetch neither prefigured nor desired this organized felicity; he was fond of his cup of tea, and only wanted to see the British constitution a good deal simplified . . .

In Paul Muniment the straightforward political theorist is shown to best advantage; Hyacinth falls quickly under the spell of the young man who reminds the reader of the simplified intellectual life enjoyed by those of his modern brothers who echo his opinion that 'one must be narrow to penetrate.' After a time, however, the negative austerities of his creed give Hyacinth pause:

. . . he moved in a dry statistical and scientific air in which it cost Hyacinth an effort of respiration to accompany him . . . he sometimes emitted a short satiric gleam which showed that his esteem for the poor was small and that if he had no illusions about the people who had got everything into their hands he had as few about those who had egregiously failed to do so.

This sort of perception has far more effect on the reader's understanding of Hyacinth's character than any later open chink in the young revolutionary's armour required by the exigencies of the plot. Sister

Rose, presented on her sick-bed as an object of pity, succeeds in filling the reader with a reluctant shamefaced distaste, so that it is a positive relief to discover, in a chance tone of irony, that the author is of the same way of thinking :

'Well, I have told you often enough that I don't go with you at all,' said Rose Muniment, whose recumbency appeared not in the least to interfere with her sense of responsibility.

Long before the appearance of the Princess Casamassima herself (she is that same Christina Light who was the downfall of Roderick Hudson, but that fact is of no more significance than as an author's joke or weakness for a created character), Hyacinth is perplexed by the conflict between the views of his friends, who all for different reasons desire the collapse of capitalist society, and his own excluded response to the finer fruits of that society. There, of course, lies his tragedy in the 'plot'—that it should be Hyacinth who has to become an assassin and who kills himself rather than go through with it. The deeper tragedy of 'character' (so exhausting of a reader's emotional response that the melodramatic ending somewhat misses fire) lies in the boy's aspirations. To these, even the sympathetic interest of the Princess is no more than a fortunate following wind—and this in spite of her own desire to play at liberty, equality and fraternity. It is of the other conspirators, without any guidance from this condescending love-hunting lady, that he first grows tired :

He wondered at their zeal, their continuity, their vivacity, their incorruptibility ; at the abundant supply of conviction and prophecy which they always had on hand. He believed that at bottom he was sorer than they, yet he had deviations and lapses, moments when the social question bored him and he forgot not only his own wrongs, which would have been pardonable, but those of the people at large, of his brothers and sisters in misery.

When he is enabled to take a short holiday on the Continent, his own Pultonville imagination has prepared him for a response quicker and more piercing than that of a dozen Princesses :

... as he lingered, before crossing the Seine, a sudden sense overtook him, making his heart sink with a kind of desolation—a sense of everything that might hold one to the world, of the sweetness of not dying, the fascination of great cities, the charm of travel and discovery, the generosity of admiration.

and he slashes out, in his bewilderment, at Paul Muniment who 'would cut up the ceilings of Veronese into strips, so that every one might have a little piece.'

It is significant that, in attempting the briefest *précis* of this novel, it is to the 'portraits' that one turns and not to the melodramatic 'plot,' full as it may be of surprises and coincidences and unnecessary

devices to keep alive an interest already and otherwise fully quickened. What Hyacinth had precisely to *do* soon slips from our memory ; we recall him as a prim unhappy little bookbinder and forget his embroilment in underground machinations while remembering his endowment with an eye for character and a soul stirred by any manifestation of the beautiful or the moving. If he has a ' split personality ' it is only the ambiguity of full sanity, of

the rather helpless sense that, whatever he saw, he saw (and this was always the case) so many other things beside. He saw the immeasurable misery of the people, and yet he saw all that had been as it were rescued and redeemed from it ; the treasures, the felicities, the splendours, the successes, of the world.

He can grasp on the instant that sense of injustice towards which his fellow-conspirators had laboured long, but at a crisis in their plotting he can cry out with exasperated impatience : ' Isn't it enough, now, to give my life to the beastly cause . . . without giving my sympathy ? ' His ambivalence is his tragedy, it is also his inner strength of private glory amid public woe as his creator progressively reveals, as in a recreation of his own youth, ' the torment of his present life, the perpetual laceration of the rebound.'

The vivid evocative quality of Hyacinth Robinson's impressions, then, are illustrated by his sense of the characters of his associates, to which he gives his whole mind and heart, rather than by the overt political attitudes to which he gives half his mind and as much of his heart as he can spare. The liveliness of Hyacinth himself and the authenticity of his claim to be (as a created character) alive in the real world and therefore *available* to all these impressions, are established primarily through his creator's ability to recreate the sights and sounds and smells of Hyacinth's London, and (still more important) the manner in which an adolescent of unusual sensibility might react to those sights and sounds and smells. We have Henry James's word for it ¹(almost, indeed, his last word) that ' the mid-Victorian London was sincere—that was a vast virtue and a vast appeal.' In those same mellow autobiographical pages ² he has told us how in a certain eating-house of the very old English tradition ' I said to myself under every shock and at the hint of every savour that this was what it was for an exhibition to reek with local colour, and one could dispense with a napkin, with a crusty roll, with room for one's elbows or one's feet, with an immunity from intermittance of the " plain boiled," much better than one could dispense with that ' ; he has gone still further and admitted again (as plainly as in the Preface to *The Princess*) his determination to *do* something with this acute receptivity to atmosphere :

If the commonest street-vista was a fairly heart-shaking con-

¹ *The Middle Years* (1917), p. 24.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 44, 54-55.

tributive image, if the incidents of the thick renascent light anywhere, and the perpetual excitement of never knowing, between it and the historic and determined gloom, which was which and which one could most 'back' for the general outcome and picture, so the great sought-out compositions, the Hampton Courts and the Windsors, the Richmonds, the Dulwiches, even the very Hampstead Heaths and Putney Commons, to say nothing of the Towers, the Temples, the Cathedrals and the strange penetrabilities of the City, ranged themselves like the rows of great figures in a sum, an amount immeasurably huge, that one would draw on if not quite as long as one lived, yet as soon as ever one should seriously get to work.

It is to this kind of sensibility, rather than to sour notions of what a young revolutionary should or should not think or dream, that a wise reader will relate Hyacinth's longings for the world represented in his untutored mind by the figure and setting of the Princess Casamassima ; it is in this divided sympathy, and not in any technical deviation from the views of Paul Muniment or Diedrich Hoffendahl, that lies the tragic weakness—and thus the human kinship—of the little Pentonville book-binder.

Le Dialogue Français

PAR ANDRÉ GIDE

On en a fait souvent la remarque—ce qui fait la grandeur, la valeur, le bienfait de notre culture française, c'est qu'elle n'est pas, si je puis dire, d'intérêt local. Les méthodes de pensée, les vérités qu'elle nous enseigne, ne sont pas particulièrement Lorraines ou Provençales et ne risquent point, par conséquent, de se retourner contre nous lorsque adoptées par un peuple voisin. Elles sont générales, humaines, susceptibles de toucher les peuples les plus divers : et comme, en elles, tout humain peut apprendre à se connaître, peut se reconnaître et communier, elles travaillent non à la division et à l'opposition, mais à la conciliation et à l'entente.

Je me hâte d'ajouter ceci, qui me paraît d'une primordiale importance : la littérature française, prise dans son ensemble, n'abonde point dans un seul sens . . . (je songe au mot exquis de Mme. de Sevigné, qui disait d'elle-même : ' Je suis loin d'abonder dans mon sens,' indiquant ainsi qu'elle gardait sur elle-même et sur les entraînements de sa sensibilité un jugement critiqué sans complaisance). La pensée française, en tout temps de son développement, de son histoire, présente à notre attention un dialogue, un dialogue pathétique et sans cesse repris, un dialogue digne entre tous d'occuper (car, en l'écoutant, l'on y participe) et notre esprit et notre coeur—et j'estime que cet esprit serait faussé, s'il n'écoutait, ou qu'on ne lui laissât entendre, que l'une des deux voix du dialogue—un dialogue non point entre une droite et une gauche politique, mais, bien plus profond et vital, entre la tradition séculaire, la soumission aux autorités reconnues, et la libre pensée, l'esprit de doute, d'examen, qui travaille à la lente et progressive émancipation de l'individu.

Nous le voyons se dessiner déjà dans la lutte entre Abélard et l'Eglise—laquelle, il va sans dire, triomphe toujours, mais en reculant et réédifiant chaque fois ses positions fort en deça de ses lignes premières. Le dialogue reprend avec Pascal contre Montaigne. Il n'y a pas échange de propos entre eux, puisque Montaigne est mort lorsque Pascal commence à parler : mais c'est pourtant à lui qu'il s'adresse—et pas seulement dans l'illustre entretien avec M. de Sacy, c'est aux 'Essais' de Montaigne que le livre des 'Pensées' s'oppose, et contre lequel, pourrait-on dire, il s'appuie. 'Le sot projet qu'il eut de se peindre,' dit-il de Montaigne, sans pressentir que les passages des 'Pensées' où lui-même, Pascal se peint et se livre, avec son angoisse et ses doutes, nous touche aujourd'hui bien plus que l'exposé de sa dogmatique. Et de même ce que nous admirons en Bossuet, ce n'est

pas le théologien désuet, c'est l'art parfait de sa langue admirable qui en fait un des plus magnifiques écrivains de notre littérature : l'art sans lequel on ne le lirait plus guère aujourd'hui. Cette forme, que lui-même estimait profane, c'est cette forme grâce à laquelle il survit.

Dialogue sans cesse repris à travers les âges et plus ou moins dissimulé du côté de la libre pensée, par prudence, cette 'prudence des serpents' comme dit l'Écriture, car le démon tentateur et émancipateur de l'esprit parle de préférence à demivoix : il insinue, tandis que le croyant proclame—et Descartes prend pour devise 'Larvatu prodeo,' 'Je m'avance masqué,'—ou mieux, c'est sous un masque que j'avance.

Et parfois, l'une des deux voix l'emporte : au XVIII^{ème} siècle, c'est celle de la libre pensée, plus masquée du tout. Elle l'emporte au point d'entraîner, comme nécessairement, un désolant tarissement du lyrisme. Mais l'équilibre du dialogue, en France, n'est jamais bien longtemps rompu. Avec Chateaubriand et Lamartine le sentiment religieux, source de lyrisme, ressurgit magnifiquement. C'est le grand flot du romantisme.

Et si Michelet et Hugo s'élèvent contre l'Église et les églises, c'est encore avec un profond sentiment religieux.

Roulant de l'un à l'autre bord, le vaisseau de la culture française s'avance et poursuit sa route hardie. 'Fluctuat nec mergitur'—il vogue et ne sera pas submergé. Il risquerait de l'être, il le serait, du jour où l'un des deux interlocuteurs du dialogue l'emporterait définitivement sur l'autre et le réduirait au silence, du jour où le navire verserait ou s'inclinerait tout d'un côté.

De nos jours, nous assistons à une prodigieuse éclosion d'écrivains catholiques : après Huysmans et Léon Bloy, Jammes Péguy, Claudel, Mauriac, Gabriel Marcel, Bernanos, Maritain . . . Mais sans parler d'un Proust ou d'un Suarès, le massif et inébranlable Paul Valéry suffirait à les balancer. Jamais l'esprit critique ne s'était plus magistralement exercé sur les problèmes les plus divers et n'avait mieux su se prouver créateur. Or je me souviens du mot d'Oscar Wilde : 'L'imagination imite : c'est l'esprit qui crée,' mot qui pourrait être de Baudelaire et que chaque artiste aurait profit à méditer. (Il ne s'agit pas, il va sans dire, de la critique d'autrui, mais de soi-même.) Car, parmi les multiples phantasmes que l'imagination désordonnément nous propose, l'esprit critique doit choisir. Tout dessin implique un choix—et c'est une école de dessin que j'admire surtout en la France.

The Last Days of Adolf Hitler

BY JONATHAN BLOW

[From the interrogation of Hanna Reitsch, test pilot of the Luftwaffe, the last person known to have seen Adolf Hitler alive.]

Ritter von Greim, Lieutenant-General of the Luftwaffe, received on April 24th, 1945, a personal telegram from the Führer. It ordered him to report forthwith to the Reich Chancellory.

Berlin was then almost surrounded by Russians. Greim decided to fly into the city by autogiro and land on 'Unter den Linden,' the Wilhelmstrasse or in the Chancellory garden itself. On the night of the 25th, he drove into Rechlin aerodrome with his personal pilot, Hanna Reitsch, prepared to take off at once. They found the only remaining autogiro out of order. There was, however, a Feldwebel pilot who had flown Albert Speer to the Führer two days before. Greim decided to take advantage of his knowledge. A Fockewolf 190 was wheeled out and forty fighters ordered to stand by to fly cover.

At dawn on the 26th they taxied out and took off—Hanna Reitsch crouching in the tail. The escort was almost at once intercepted by a Russian fighter patrol and a running fight ensued. As they neared Berlin the air seemed thick with the Red Air Force. Plane after plane of the escort went down in flames but the Fockewolf escaped with a few wing shots. They reached Gatow, on the western edge of the capital, the only Berlin airport still in German hands. It was being constantly strafed and they landed under heavy fire.

They changed quickly into a Fiesler-Storch—a tiny two-seater passenger plane capable of landing in a very small space. Greim took the controls himself and, while the survivors of their escort engaged the enemy, he took off and headed east. He skimmed low over the Havel See and at roof-top level made for the Brandenburger Tor under a whirling cover of dog-fights. Puffs of smoke spurting out of the ground below marked the burst of artillery and mortars. Twisting and turning he dodged the streams of red tracer that shot up at them. Suddenly the plane lurched and Greim slumped forward in his seat. A burst of fire had torn out the bottom, smashing the General's right foot. Hanna bent over his shoulders, seized the controls, righted them and managed to land.

She scrambled out and helped the General from the cockpit. Shells were landing unpleasantly close. A truck came bumping up the street at full speed. Hanna succeeded in stopping it. Von Greim was laid in the back and they drove to the Chancellory. They found that the Führer had abandoned the building itself and was in the deep, bomb-proof shelter in the garden.

They reached the shelter soon after six. The first person to meet them at the bottom of the stairs was Frau Goebbels. She embraced them with tears in her eyes, expressing astonishment that, after so much treachery, anyone still had the loyalty and courage to come to their Führer's side. Von Greim was taken straight to the operating room where Dr. Stumpfecker, Hitler's personal doctor, attended to his wound.

Suddenly the door opened and Hitler himself came into the room. His face was full of gratitude. In spite of the pain, Von Greim sat bolt upright on his bed and reported himself for duty in the approved manner of the German army.

Then the Führer asked him abruptly if he knew why he had sent for him.

'No, mein Führer.'

'Because Hermann Göring has betrayed and deserted both me and his Fatherland. Behind my back he has parleyed with the enemy. Against my orders he has gone to Berchtesgaden to save himself. From there he has sent me a disrespectful telegram. He said that I had once named him as my successor and that now, as I was no longer able to rule from Berlin, he was prepared to rule from Berchtesgaden in my place. He ended the telegram by stating that if he had no reply from me by nine-thirty that night he would assume my answer to be in the affirmative.'

With eyes half closed and in a voice unusually low he went on: 'I immediately had Hermann Göring arrested as a traitor to the Reich. I took from him all his offices of State. I removed him from all organisations. That is why I have called you to me. I hereby declare you Göring's successor as Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe. In the name of the German people I give you my hand.'

Hanna remained at her General's side that evening. He was in great pain. From outside came the continuous rumble of gun-fire, ever nearer and louder.

An S.S. orderly entered and said that the Führer would see Hanna Reitsch at once in his own room. She found him seated at his desk. As she closed the door he slowly raised his head from his hands. His face was tired and deeply lined. A film of moisture covered his eyes.

In a small voice he said, 'Hanna, you belong to those who will die with me. Each of us has a phial of poison such as this,' with which he handed her one for Von Greim and one for herself. 'I do not wish one of us to fall into Russian hands alive, nor do I wish our bodies to be found by them. Each person is responsible for destroying his body so that nothing recognisable remains. Eva and I will have our bodies burned. You will devise your own method. Please inform General von Greim.'

Reitsch collapsed into a chair. For the first time it dawned on

her that the Führer believed the cause lost. Through her tears she begged him to save himself. 'Live, mein Führer, that Germany may live!'

'No,' he said. 'If I die it is for the honour of Germany. It is because as a soldier I must obey my own command to defend Berlin to the last. My dear girl, I did not intend it so. I believed firmly that Berlin would be saved on the banks of the Oder. Everything we had was moved to hold that position. When our best efforts failed I was the most horror struck of all. Then the Bolsheviks began to encircle the capital. The knowledge that there were 3,000,000 Germans in Berlin made it necessary that I stay to defend them. By staying I believed that all my troops in the land would take example through my act and come to the rescue of the city. I hoped that they would rise to superhuman efforts to save me and thereby save my 3,000,000 fellow Germans. But, my Hanna, I still have hope.' He sprang up and began to pace the room, with quick, stumbling strides, his hands clasped behind him. 'The army of General Wenck is advancing from the south. He must—he will—drive the Russians back long enough to save my people. Then we will fall back, but we will hold again.'

Hanna returned to Von Greim's bedside. A heavy shell landed on the terrace outside and burst with a metallic clang. Another and another followed. The explosions were mixed with the crash of falling masonry. Russian heavy artillery had registered the Chancellory itself. Von Greim thought this might be the prelude to an infantry assault. He sent Hanna for two heavy grenades. If the Russians overran the gardens he decided that they would drink their phials of poison and then pull the pins from the grenades, each holding one tightly to the stomach.

Dawn came, however, and the barrage subsided. Though busy nursing her General, Hanna saw something of the other occupants of the shelter.

Dr. Goebbels was incensed at Göring's treachery. He strode up and down cursing him and attributing every disaster to him. He blamed him for the desperate situation at the fronts, for their own predicament and said that if the war were lost Göring was the cause. All those days Goebbels seemed to be playing a carefully self-chosen part in this Gotterdamernung. He spoke with studied oratory as if addressing the historians of the future. The last time Hanna Reitsch saw him he said, 'We shall go down for the glory of the Reich, so that the name of Germany will live for ever.'

Frau Goebbels was very brave. She was mainly occupied in attending to her six children—Hela aged 12, Hilda 11, Helmut 9, Holde 7, Hedda 5 and Heide 3. She took great pains to keep them neat and tidy, and to amuse them. In their presence she was always

self-composed. Yet sometimes as she looked at them she would quickly leave the room and burst into tears. Everyone in the shelter, from the Führer to the S.S. orderlies, entered into keeping them happy. Hanna told them stories of her flights and the countries she had visited. They were in great spirits, laughing and shouting, and singing songs to the wounded von Greim. They talked of life in 'the cave,' of how Mummy had told them that no harm could come to them as long as their Uncle Führer was near and of how Uncle Führer himself had told them that his soldiers would soon drive the nasty Russians away so that they could go out and play in the Chancellory garden. Their happy laughter was a strange sound to hear in that shelter, over which the shadow of death seemed hourly to fall deeper. 'They belong to the Führer and the Third Reich,' Frau Goebbels said. 'If both cease to exist there is no place for them.' Her fear was that at the last moment she might be too weak to kill them.

It is the belief of Hanna Reitsch that she was not too weak.

Hanna Reitsch thought Eva Braun an exceptionally beautiful woman. She was always beautifully dressed and spent much of her time before her mirror. She changed her clothes many times a day. Whenever Hitler was present she was always charming and she attended to his every comfort.

Out of his hearing she raved at 'the traitors,' who seemed to comprise, eventually for her, everyone not in the shelter. 'Poor, poor Adolf, deserted by everyone, betrayed by all,' she kept repeating.

The prospect of dying with the Führer she accepted as a matter of course. It never occurred to her to even think of living in a world without him and the Third Reich.

Reichsleiter Martin Bormann, the Führer's right-hand man, was absorbed in recording every remark, every action for posterity. It would be a document, he said, 'which would take its place among the greatest chapters of German history.' He listened avidly to everything Hitler said and then turned back to his desk. From time to time he would come up to someone who had just been favoured by the presence and ask, scowlingly, exactly what the Führer had just said.

These, together with General Krebs of the Infantry, Admiral Vosz liaison officer from Doenitz, S.S. Obergruppenführer Fegelein liaison officer from Himmler and husband of Eva Braun's sister, Oberst von Below Göring's liaison officer, Hitler's personal doctor and pilots, Hevel from Ribbentrop's office and Dr. Lorenz of the Reich Press comprised the principle inmates of the shelter.

That afternoon S.S. Obergruppenführer Fegelein disappeared. Shortly afterwards a message came that he had been caught trying to slip out through the German lines in the outskirts of the city, dressed in civilian clothes and claiming to be a refugee. Hitler ordered his

immediate execution. This desertion by Himmler's personal liaison officer cast a fresh gloom. It was the first inkling of the defection of the S.S. Chief himself.

Soon after dark an intensive bombardment of the Chancellory area by several hundred Russian guns began. Salvo after salvo crashed above their heads. Again it was thought that this might be the prelude to an infantry assault. The Führer called a suicide council. It was agreed that as soon as Russian troops broke into the Chancellory gardens the mass suicide should begin. A long discussion then followed on the most efficient way of totally destroying a human body. Finally everyone in turn rose and declared his loyalty to the Führer. Yet throughout the evening there ran the hope that General Wenck's army would still break through in time.

Hanna learned something of the prelude to her arrival. On April 20th Hitler had held his last full supreme war council in the Chancellory. The reports of its members had been a long list of crushing defeats from all fronts. For the first time the Führer, in his place at the top of the table, completely and publicly broke down. He never really recovered.

Every gun, every tank, every man had been set to hold the west bank of the Oder. When the Russian armies swept across it Berlin was depleted of arms. There was no coherent plan for its defence, which at the last moment Hitler decided to direct from the shelter. He had none of the mechanics necessary for a headquarters—no knowledge of the dispositions of his own troops or the enemy's, no maps, no radio and no proper staff. His communications consisted of a solitary telephone line to a flak-tower from which messages could be radioed by means of a balloon suspended aerial. By the night of April 28th, even this solitary link with the battle had almost ceased to function. The fact that General Wenck's army, on which he counted, had long ago been destroyed, was only one example of how completely out of touch he was. While the Russians battered their way into his capital the supreme war lord of Germany sat helplessly in his shelter planning imaginary counter-attacks with formations that had long disintegrated.

His spirits sank lower and lower. Then he would suddenly start up, shout that he could hear the sound of Wenck's guns and stride about the room flourishing a street map, which was slowly disintegrating from the sweat of his hands, and 'direct' the defence to anyone who might be listening.

On the afternoon of the 29th the flak-tower's radio, which had been working very precariously, managed to receive an incoming signal. It stated that Reich-minister Heinrich Himmler had contacted the British and American governments through Sweden. He had proposed a capitulation to the San Francisco conference. This

was the bitterest blow of all—Himmler, defender of the Reich, the ruthless advocate of resistance to the end. Hitler was at first stunned. Then his colour rose to a heated red, his face became transfigured and he raged, shouted, and foamed at the mouth.

The end was near. Bursts of Russian machine-gun and even rifle-fire were spattering the walls. Reports from above said that the enemy were nearing the Potsdamer Platz. General Krebs expected a full-scale assault on the Chancellory next day.

Not long after midnight Hitler came into Von Greim's room. His face was white. He said that he had just been informed that Wenck's guns were shelling the Russian positions in the Potsdamer Platz. He ordered Von Greim to return to Rechlin and muster every remaining plane to support the relieving army. Von Greim was also to discover whether the report of Himmler's treachery was true. If it was, he charged him at all costs to hunt Himmler down. As he mentioned the S.S. Chief's name his voice shook and his hands trembled. Von Greim begged to be allowed to stay and die with his Führer, but Hitler cut him short.

Everyone crowded round Von Greim and Hanna Reitsch as they left. They pushed hastily scrawled letters into their hands, tokens to be taken back to the world. Frau Goebbels pulled off a diamond ring and thrust it on to Hanna's finger. Von Below, Göring's former liaison officer, said to the General: 'You must get out. It depends upon you to save the honour of the Luftwaffe, to save the meaning of Germany for the world.'

They emerged into the night. Steel-helmeted S.S. were firing from slit trenches. They crawled along, Von Greim in agony, streams of machine-gun bullets whipping overhead. An S.S. officer guided them to a small armoured car standing in the Wilhelmstrasse. They drove north towards Unter den Linden. Shells whined and clanged on the roadway. There was a sudden humming in their ears and a violent concussion. A direct hit on the car, knocking out its engine. They scrambled out and managed to cover the distance to the Brandenburger Tor. A small plane, an Arado, the very last that remained, stood ready in a revetment. 400 uncratered yards of the Charlottenburger Chaussee stretched ahead.

Hanna Reitsch took the controls. The plane raced forwards and rose into the air. They skimmed over the Column of Victory. The skeleton of the Reichstag's dome stood outlined against a crimson glow. Small arms fire jabbed up at them. Searchlights chased them and streams of red anti-aircraft shells rose from the ground. Climbing to 20,000 feet the whole of Berlin seemed one great sea of flame and all around it, in a continuous circle, flashed the guns of the Red Army.

Pages from a Syrian Diary

BY W. D. HICKLEY

We were building a road. We moved past Asmarine and Darkouche, along the Turkish frontier and up the Orontes Valley to Jisr-ech-Chagour. South of Jisr the valley opened into a cliff-girt marsh, by the edge of which we camped on a slope covered with round, black, volcanic rocks. Every night for ten nights we lay sleepless, tormented by a swarm of mosquitoes whose high-pitched whine circled round us through the dark. The marsh came alive. It hummed with myriads of whining, droning mosquitoes and after dark the putrefying stink of it crept up and slipped furtively into our tents like a thief. We were near a village. Its houses resembled untidy and neglected crofters' cottages, their low walls and gables of black boulders, their roofs of blackened thatch, the people who inhabited them wearing black clothes, against the tumbled, gigantic gravel of black, volcanic rocks : everything black.

At the bottom of the valley the stinking, pestiferous marsh stretched away from our black boulders in a sea of reeds to the hazy-blue cliffs of the further shore, three miles away. Through the sea of reeds water buffalo floundered, and out of it appeared low hummocks of islands on which were more black cottages and black-dressed people. When winter came to an end, they left the cottages, which were overrun with fleas, and moved into a summer encampment on the ground close by. Along the winding tracks that led through the reeds the people came and worked for us, small, dark, weedy people, all riddled with malaria and half-crazy, their chins tattooed with blue birds.

We could not escape the mosquitoes or the marsh. We were imprisoned on both sides by the great cliffs which we could not climb and by the sloping shore of volcanic boulders through which lorries could not go. The problem was to find a place high up, where the wind blew ; but everywhere the searching eye met defeat, against the unscalable cliff and on the more gentle slopes above, where castle-like crests of rock rose through a slag-heap of trickling, broken stone. We searched further and further along the road to the south, looking in every bay and indent for a way up.

As the road forged ahead, we progressed up the valley, past Kastoun with its filthy black cottages nestling against a small and long-dead volcano which rose to a height of some hundred feet. Seeing this volcanic cone I looked along the length of the valley with renewed interest to where it disappeared in vaguely outlined mountains,

noticing for the first time how crater succeeded crater in the length of it, all lying to one side of the valley. I saw a geological drama of the past, the earth split apart and rolled back as if by a Mosaic wand, until the walls were three miles apart and out of the depths of the fissure the bottom of the valley slowly rising, smoke and steam jetting from the cones. We went past Kaleidin, another cone, now uninhabited and covered with short, dry grass. Here was a deep pool close into the cliff to which, in the morning, lines of goats streamed down the amphitheatre of the hillside to the water. Here shepherd boys dressed in bright yellow sat on a stone wall and piped rambling, melancholy trills to the deaf rocks.

From Kaleidin the march swept up to the cliff face and our road was swept with it, right under the horrid, clanging, resounding wall, the top split and fretted into jagged slivers by the frost and the heat of the ages. Upon the summits of the great, windworn pilasters and buttresses buzzards, hawks and vultures perched unmoving like angels on the pinnacles of a cathedral. Clear, bright, unexpected springs burst from the overhanging foot into bubbling lagoons which had undercut the floor of the valley into funnels and caverns. By the roadside vultures danced and flapped in the carcasses of dead animals and, at our approach, staggered away drunk and incapable, ship-like and unbelievably huge. We shot at them. Others swooped and banked silently overhead, far up, above the rock pinnacles, above the statuesque hawks, right in the eye of the sky itself. And then, beyond the sudden ending of the rock wall, at the turn of a corner, riding the summit of a gigantic cone, itself perched out of the valley on the cliff top, were the walls and towers of a castle, dusky red, four tall pointed arches slashed into the depths of its highest wall, at whose foot minute people passed in and out of the gates. From the map its name resounded like a blast of trumpets; Ain Tohfur!

For us there were no trumpets, but the urgent problem of finding a home, somewhere in the clean air, away from the high whine of nightly mosquitoes and the slinking night thief of marsh vapours. I searched, regretting that we could not use the castle, for it was already filled with impudent little houses. We went further, to a point below the castle hill where the columns of a Greek temple were sinking slowly into the slime. Here, at last, we saw an ill-defined road breasting the hill beyond the fortress. We went up and found ourselves on a wide, flat down-land, grassy, dotted with distant black tents and grazing camels. On our left hand, behind the castle, on a plateau sweeping back from it, we saw a strange prospect; acres of tumbled stones sleeping in the grass and fluted columns hurled down and lying in serried sections. There had been a city there, agora, temple, baths; the great city of Apamea, second only to Antioch and founded by the soldiers of Alexander the Great. It had been long gone,

overthrown by an earthquake before the memory of the tent-dwellers and the marsh-dwellers, and now slept in the grass. We turned away from its thick, sunny silence, ourselves silenced, and wandered onto the grass-grown cliffs above the valley. Here, at Tell Balaliou, we pitched our camp.

From the new camp there were far prospects. In front of us the wall of the great fissure dropped away and we looked across the sea of reeds to the further shore, a line of steep mountains, dotted with faint scattered trees. It was far and few details could be distinguished, but we knew it was the region of the Alouites, patterned as if on an embroidered curtain. To the right rose Ain Tohfar, now on a level with the eye, but still formidable, and on the left, about a mile away, right on the cliff edge, another broad shallow cone covered with white houses and crowned with a domed building, the village of Squalbiye. Three or four miles beyond it yet another cone could be seen, the village of Tell Salha, until finally the valley faded into misty hills at Massiaf, once capital of the Assassins. On our hill top the cool wind blew all day long dispersing the heat and the flies.

Our workmen came from Squalbiye and gradually we began to learn about them ; how they were Christians and how they claimed descent from the people who had once sauntered through the colonnades of pagan Apamea. One day, curious to find out, I went past a black encampment of Arab tents, the people all dressed in saffron gowns, their faces dark and lined, and arrived at the foot of the hill of Squalbiye. From the camp the village had appeared white or pale-golden, depending on the time of day. Standing close to it, it gave an impression of greyness, greyness and dust, grey dust, all thick and soft, lying around the base of the hill, between the base of the hill and the acres of vineyards that surrounded it. Pigs rooted and grunted in the dust ; not the round, fat, box-like pigs of England, but swift, nimble, spiny, blade-backed hogs, looking evil-tempered and fierce as they scoured the vineyard edges for refuse.

I had been seen from the hill and people were awaiting my arrival. A priest was there, tall, in a long black robe, rather old and shiny, and a tall, black, cylindrical hat, a man of about thirty-five, wearing spectacles and a black beard, with a face like an Assyrian king. He was father Ananias, the junior of the two village priests, and I addressed him by the title of ' Abouna ' which means ' our father. '

On our way to the church we crossed the market-place, women pounding clothes with stones under a spring gushing from the rock face, then through a street of small, cavernous shops, and began climbing the hill between grey houses plastered with mud, rough, hard and cracked. People came padding down the hill in little clouds of dust, men wearing the Arab head-cloth, with striped shirts tucked into their dark-blue, baggy trousers, the girls unveiled, coloured

handkerchiefs around their heads, wearing embroidered jackets and skirts of bottle green.

From the top of the hill came childish shrieks and, on turning a corner, we came upon a stone wall in which was the door of the church. In the middle of the street an old man, dressed in a black gown like the other priest, was sitting on a stone. His face was strong and ruddy and a huge white beard flowed onto his bosom. He sat there, like father Nile, whilst a score of children scrambled over his knees and onto his shoulders and he shook with gusts of laughter.

'My father,' the young priest explained. 'Father Abraham.'

Seeing me, the old man shook off the children as a dog shakes off water and came up to me, very tall and straight. His penetrating eyes searched my face for a moment, then he embraced me with a blessing. While the younger priest and I entered the church, the old man returned to the delighted children whose attention had been divided between their beloved Abouna and the strange foreign soldier. The inside of the church was high and cool and bare. A tinkling glass chandelier hung in festoons from the centre of the dome and a lofty wooden screen, hiding the altar, stretched across the chancel arch. Its panels were painted with pictures of the twelve apostles, flat and stiff, with gold-leafed haloes. We went through the screen doors into the sanctuary behind and here father Ananias opened a wooden coffer and began speaking.

'Some years ago,' he said, 'there was trouble throughout the land. Nationalist and government troops were marching to and fro along the coast and between the big cities. At this moment, when the government was occupied with these affairs, the Bedouins, Alouites and other Arabs in the vicinity combined against us, for we are a rich village, full of merchandise and the treasure of the church which I will show you.'

From the coffer he brought out chalices and incense-burners and plates and crosses, all finely wrought, and placed them on the altar for me to see. He picked up a chalice in solid gold and gave it to me to examine.

'Many of these things,' he said, 'and the vestments and copes embroidered in gold and silver came from Kiev in Russia and amongst them that cup.'

I looked at the cup, but the inscription was in old Russian and difficult for me. I distinguished the word 'Chashka,' meaning 'a cup.'

'Tell me, Abouna,' I said. 'What happened with the Arabs?'

'We are a rich village,' he continued, 'and also Unbelievers.' He smiled ironically. 'By a fortunate chance we heard of their designs and sent away all the women and children to Hama, but not too soon, for presently we found ourselves surrounded by a force of

about five thousand men. Some of them were Bedawi from the tents, such as you saw at the village gate, some were marsh-Arabs from the valley below, some Alouites from the hills on the further side of the valley. We fortified ourselves by joining together the walls of the houses at the foot of the hill and thus surrounding the village with a wall. But an army of Kurds came down from the north, bringing a cannon with them, and this they set up against our wall and breached it. The battle continued for about a week, until government troops arrived and the enemy dispersed. So the village was saved and the treasure which had been buried during that time.'

'Were there many killed?' I asked.

He smiled and said, 'Judging by your wars, not many. From our village two only were killed, praise be to God! They are buried close by the bell-tower in a chantry. Many more of the enemy were killed, but I do not know the exact number.'

When he had finished his story I went through the door in the screen into the main body of the church again. Some men had come in and were kneeling on the pavement, their head-cloths still on and the band only removed. A woman entered, kissed the Gospels which stood on a lectern near the door, and knelt down. Flies buzzed around and the chandelier played a faint, Aeolian tune in the perpetual breeze. From outside came children's voices where they were playing with the old man in the shadow of the marble chantry where the two slain men were buried. Through the door of the church I looked straight out, across the valley to the opposite cliff, three miles away. The embroidered curtain of its landscape was shifting and waving in the currents of heat that rose from the depths of the great fissure three hundred feet below, while up here the wind still blew.

Arthur Koestler

BY RAYMOND MORTIMER

'Of living English novelists I like Koestler the best.' This was said to me recently by a friend in France, where *Darkness at Noon* has, in translation, enjoyed a sensational success. 'He is wonderfully living,' I answered, 'but he is not English; he is not a novelist; and how far is he, as a writer, even likable?'

Take first the matter of nationality, which here is crucial, for Mr. Koestler's books are packed with observations upon national character. He is a Hungarian Jew educated in Austria. Bilingual by education, he has had to learn a third language in which to write. This he has done with signal success: his English is fluent, neat, and highly readable. But it has no personal flavour. Finding a page torn out of one of his books, you might guess it was Koestler by the content, but never by the rhythm or the choice of words. In this he falls short of Conrad, who also had to learn the language in which he wrote.

Second: Is he a novelist? The answer depends on your definition. Four of his books are in the form of fiction. *The Gladiators*, the earliest, is a novel about the Spartacist revolt in ancient Rome. It is a brilliant essay upon the nature of revolution and the revolutionary. *Darkness at Noon* presents the Moscow Treason Trials as it were in miniature, and explains the author's disillusionment with Soviet Russia. It is deeply convincing and moving, as well as painfully exciting. It throws a flood of light on revolutionary psychology, but again the characters are representative rather than individual. 'The characters in this book,' the author explains, 'are fictitious. The historical circumstances which determined their actions are real. The life of N. S. Rubashev is a synthesis of the lives of a number of men who were victims of the so-called Moscow trials. Several of them were personally known to the author. This book is dedicated to their memory.'

Arrival and Departure comes nearer to being a novel than any of the others; and, probably for this reason, it is much the least successful of Mr. Koestler's books. It is the story of a Communist intellectual who has escaped from prison to a neutral country where he discovers through psychoanalysis the explanation alike of his courage and of his occasional weakness. The book is remarkable in its horrifying pictures of life under the Nazis, and of refugees in Lisbon, but the love story is embarrassing. *Thieves in the Night*, Mr. Koestler's latest book,

is prefaced by the statement: 'The characters in this book are fictitious. The happenings are not.'

A true novelist may, like Tolstoy and George Eliot, be concerned to illustrate a philosophical point of view; he may even, like Dickens and Zola, be anxious to bring about particular reforms; but he must first, I suggest, be supremely interested in the personal relations between individuals. These occupy Mr. Koestler's attention only in so far as they can be used to illuminate ideological struggles and the nature of the revolutionary or his opponent. Fiction, in fact, is not his aim but his instrument—an instrument that he uses with deadly precision and efficacy.

If I find Mr. Koestler's writing unlikable, it is because he accepts as normal what I believe and hope is abnormal—because he treats ordinary, peaceable enjoyment as trivial or even discreditable. I am a conservative only in that I prefer old governments to new ones. Old governments have lost their fangs; or rather, having no reason to fear the people, they have no reason to inspire fear in the people. And under such governments—American or British, Swiss or Swedish, whether republican or monarchist makes no difference—men and women can, except when menaced by foreign powers, give themselves, their day's work done, to such enjoyments as their temperaments require—making music or love, fishing or studying—in the confidence that neither their religion nor their race nor their political opinions will expose them to persecution.

The notion of happiness has in Europe—and I cannot, alas, altogether exclude England—become discredited. We have had to be stoical to survive, and stoicism has become a habit. Europeans have become addicts of calamity. Our most imperious need is to rehabilitate enjoyment. The prophets to whom we should listen are Montaigne and Voltaire—Voltaire who, while fighting like a tiger against intolerance, never forgot the supreme importance of happiness. I find Mr. Koestler's books dislikable because they neglect the necessity or even the existence of gardening.

Mr. Koestler will answer, with complete justice, that you and I have had no more direct experience of fanaticism and revolution than of leprosy or bubonic plague. Even war, though the older among us have twice been more or less directly involved in it, strikes us as essentially abnormal. Contrast our lives with Mr. Koestler's; read *Spanish Testament* and *Scum of the Earth*. He is an expatriate who has become an exile. He has been hideously persecuted both as a Socialist and as a Jew. He could have escaped from Europe years before the war, but he preferred to remain where he could most effectively fight the powers of evil. He has been imprisoned and sentenced to death in Spain. He has been in prison in France and even in England. He has lived in hourly danger of capture and torture by the Gestapo.

Though he eventually escaped into security, many of his friends have either killed themselves or been murdered.

An experience in some ways even more agonising and mutilating to Mr. Koestler has been a loss of faith. For seven years, one of which he spent in the U.S.S.R., he was an active Communist. Then, in 1937, came a staggering shock: he discovered Soviet Communism to be 'the greatest farce the world has ever seen.' The reasons for this conclusion are very lucidly exposed in *The Yogi and the Commissar* as well as in *Darkness at Noon*.

His conversion was incomparably more than a change of opinion such as in the United States turns a Republican into a Democrat, or in England a Labour man into a Conservative. It can be better compared with the loss of faith that obliges a Jesuit to desert his Order, his priesthood, and his belief in the Church. Seven years of his life had been sacrificed for what he now found to be not merely mistaken but actively wrong. Mr. Koestler remains a Marxist. He is not a Trotskyite, nor have the mildness and the native empiricism of the Labour Party any appeal for him. He is not merely independent: he is, or feels, isolated.

It is probable, therefore, that like almost all Communists who have lost their faith, he suffers, consciously or unconsciously, from unreasonable feelings of guilt. (*Arrival and Departure* must certainly not be taken as autobiographical, but it reveals a preoccupation with the neurosis of a revolutionary that would hardly exist in a man unaware of his own neurotic symptoms.) If, as I have suggested, Mr. Koestler seems to turn a blind eye to such ordinary experiences as a happy marriage leading to a congenial family life, it is probably because he feels impelled, predestined, to guerrilla loneliness, a mixture of Don Quixote and a rogue elephant.

As a writer he is inspired by hatred and contempt—profound though his sympathy and self-identification may be with the displaced and persecuted who are treated as the scum of the earth. The trouble is that his condition is more wretched than theirs. If ever they escape to safety, they may resume their lives; but he can breathe only in the climate of violence. How far this obligation affects the man as well as the writer I do not know; but his extraordinary talent is undeniably focused upon manifestations of cruelty and intolerance. He ends *Scum of the Earth* with these sentences:

... this is our unique and ultimate war aim: to teach this planet to laugh again. At the moment we are still howling like dogs in the dark. I wish the time of laughter had come.

It is doubtful whether the time for laughter ever will come, ever could come, for Mr. Koestler. He has forgotten, if he ever knew, how to laugh, except in mockery.

He has been compared with Jean-Jacques Rousseau : his love and pity for humanity turn easily to distrust or contempt when confronted with ordinary human beings. Look at the portraits of commonplace persons of every nationality in his books. They are covered with spittle. Not even Swift is more consistently lacking in geniality. Consider again his life, and can you be surprised ? To burble about gardening to such a man is an absurdity if not an insult. But the writer is never the whole man—he is the man playing a part, giving a performance. And for all I know, the author of these terrifying books may find his principal pleasure in weeding a lawn and growing primulas.

None of the criticisms I have allowed myself can affect the fact that Mr. Koestler's writings are immensely impressive. On the contrary. His not being English makes him to an English reader all the more stimulating. His thoughts and feelings have all the fascination of unfamiliarity, exciting perpetual surprise. And he writes with an intensity of passion rare among us. His not being in essence a novelist helps his novels to be vastly more thoughtful and profound than the vast majority of novels, whether they describe trivial persons doing trivial things or half-witted criminals murdering for the sake of money. (The first criterion for any novel, I suggest, is the question 'Do you mind what happens to the characters?' ; and this is a test very few novels can pass.) Again, his books, just because they are unlikely, excite one's gusto for controversy and are—except for *Arrival and Departure*—impossible to put down. In any case unlikely books are necessary. There are in England writers far superior to Mr. Koestler in poetic imagination, in sensibility, in wisdom, in style, and in the art of inventing personages. But I can think of few who write about the diseases of our civilisation with anything approaching his acuteness and fervour.

His latest novel, *Thieves in the Night*, is a passionately controversial account of the Zionist situation in Palestine between 1937 and 1939. Mr. Koestler has written nothing more gripping, and the subject allows him for the first time to make full use of his gift for sardonic comedy. Admittedly it is a novel only in form ; and any criticism of it is bound to be concerned chiefly with estimating the accuracy and completeness of the picture it presents. Only an impartial expert upon Palestine could deal with it adequately ; and even if such a phoenix could be found, his impartiality would be admitted by none of the contending parties. I approach, therefore, my impossible task with a certain despondency.

The chief character in the book is called Joseph : the action is seen mostly through his eyes, and recorded in his journal. He is a young Englishman, half Jewish, who has gone to Palestine, where he joins a group of other Zionists, mostly from Central Europe, who after

five years' training found an agricultural community called Ezra's Tower. They have been allotted a barren hill, purchased by the National Fund. After a preliminary skirmish with the Arabs, in which one of the Zionists is killed, the community grows and, by dint of rigorous industry and self-sacrifice, becomes solvent. It is a self-governing unit, practising unmitigated communism, like some of the utopian communities established in nineteenth-century America.

Our Communes are the only place in the world where individual property is completely vested in the community, where all men are really equal, and where you can live and die without ever having touched money. In these hundred odd settlements of ours we have now been practising pure rural communism for over thirty years. We have survived all trials without sacrificing a single basic principle, and have transformed a seemingly utopian idea into a small-scale but significant working concern.

The first half of the book is chiefly occupied with the development of this community, and is masterly. The second half is wider in its range, and less completely successful. We see the Zionists divided into two parties: those who believe in obeying the law, even when they think it unjust, and who consider that Zionism can succeed only by winning the good will of the Palestinian natives; and those who believe that the Jews have suffered in patience too long and too atrociously, and who therefore employ terrorism against both the Arabs and the British. Joseph begins as an adherent of the former party, and ends by joining the latter. For, in 1939, the British issued the White Paper setting a limit to Jewish immigration, although the Jews of Central Europe were threatened with extermination unless they could escape.

The personal relations of the characters are, as we have come to expect, subsidiary to the contest of ideas. Joseph is torn in his feelings between two women in the community: one of them his mistress, and eventually his wife; the other a much more congenial and intellectual girl whose hideous experience during the persecution in Europe has made her allergic to even the most trivial physical contact. She goes out alone one night into the wild surrounding country, where she is raped and murdered by Arabs. This atrocity helps to precipitate Joseph into the Terrorist movement. The grounds on which he comes to this decision are not put forward as rational.

'But I don't want to be reasonable,' I shouted, 'I have had enough of being reasonable for two thousand years while others were not. I was the reasonable fly running in zigzags over the window-pane because there was light on the other side and I had my legs torn out and my wings burnt off with matches. I am through with your reasonableness.'

This feeling that, since turning the other cheek has been of so little avail, hitting back may somehow prove more effective seems to be fortified by a comprehensible delight in seeing the Jews, often so unjustly accused of cowardice, display in their terrorism the fiercest audacity.

Joseph himself is not altogether credible as a character. He is supposed to have been brought up by his Gentile mother and grandparents as an ordinary member of the English upper middle class. Then in his first year at Oxford he is insulted in humiliating (and peculiarly improbable) circumstances by a female Fascist, and this 'incident' makes him for the first time conscious that he is a Jew. It is difficult to believe in his English background, because Mr. Koestler uses him so often and so freely as a mouthpiece for his own opinions and emotions.

The other characters are silhouetted to represent the various national or political points of view. This is done most skilfully and effectively, as is also the landscape-painting. The impression we receive of Palestine, its peoples and its problems, is extremely vivid. We follow the fortunes of the community with excitement and sympathy, we are staggered by the self-sacrificing vigour of the settlers, and we are persuaded to share the author's contempt for the feckless Arabs and the stupid British administrators with their suburban-minded wives.

Mr. Koestler has a particular gift for parable. He compares the Zionists, for instance, to our remote ancestors the fish who, leaving their fellows, first crept ashore and became amphibians.

Instead of drifting with streamlined grace through the water, they had to waddle and wobble painfully on their bellies through swamp and muck, and gasp piteously for air with a new and imperfect contraption specially evolved for this purpose. . . .

The Arabs are the fish. They are happy, they have tradition and beauty and self-sufficiency and lead a timeless, care-free, lackadaisical life. Compared to them we are the graceless amphibians. That's one reason why the English love them and dislike us. It is not political. It is their nostalgia for the lost paradise—a kind of eternal week-end—and their detestation of the 8.35 to the City. For behold, we are the force that drives the fishes ashore, the nervous whip of evolution.

There is much wisdom in this. The great English Arabophiles from Doughty and Scawen Blunt to T. E. Lawrence and Freya Stark have all hated the bustle, promiscuity, and general hideousness of the modern industrialised world. They have loved the desert life and those who live it, because of a conviction that progress has taken a disastrously wrong turning. The recent history of Dachau and Hiroshima may be thought to provide some support for this contention.

And here is another of Mr. Koestler's parables, illustrating the Arab attitude to the immigrants :

Of course they don't like us. They are slum-children in possession of a vast playground where they wallow happily in the dust. In comes another bunch of children who have nowhere to play and start cleaning up the place and building tents and lavatories with a horrible burst of efficiency. 'Get out from here,' they cry, 'we don't want you,'—'But there is plenty of room,' says the clever lot, 'and we've got permission to share it, and after we've improved it, the place will be much nicer for you too.'—'Get out, get out,' they cry, having already pinched some of the newcomers' tools and toys ; 'get out, we don't want you. This is our place and we like it as it is.'

Passionate emotion, which in most people blunts the intelligence, serves to make Mr. Koestler's mind more vivacious. His direct experience of the sufferings of the Jews in Europe excites in him a burning enthusiasm for a Palestinian State as the one answer to their difficulties. His Communist idealism, so cruelly disappointed by the U.S.S.R., finds in the Zionist communities a realisation of his dreams. And also, perhaps, this stormy petrel finds just the material suited to his talents in a country raked with violence and terror. *Thieves in the Night* does not contain a dull page. It is a masterpiece of propaganda.

Like all the most skilful advocates, Mr. Koestler is at pains to seem objective in the eyes of the juryman—in this case the reader. If he writes about the Arabs and the British with amused contempt, he goes out of his way to be offensive about the Jews. Here, for instance, are some extracts from Joseph's journal :

Before my father died there was a time when he took me every Sunday to the slums. There I learned that the poor were not the nice superior people which they appear in fairy stories, but wretched, illiterate and drunk. . . . I became a socialist not because I loved, but because I hated, the poor. They were what conditions had made them, and therefore conditions had to be changed.

After the Incident I began to frequent those whom I had decided to regard henceforth as my people. They were as disappointing as the poor had been. I was attracted by their keenness, their intensity and their brains, but their achievements were spoiled for me by their ostentation. I hated their acid analytical faculty, their inability to relax. I hated their lack of form and ceremony and breeding, their short-cuts from courtesy to familiarity, their mixture of arrogance and cringing. They were the slum race of the world : their slums were ghettos, whether the walls were made of stone or prejudice. . . .

But Jewry is a sick race ; its disease is homelessness, and can only be cured by abolishing its homelessness.

I became a socialist because I hated the poor ; and I became a Hebrew because I hated the Yid.

Yet when the desired transformation has been effected, the Jewish character changed, the results are described with a similar lack of indulgence :

We do not want romantics and permanent upheavals. We want a stable pattern of life for our people. And if the new generation accepts the pattern we have evolved, there should be nothing but rejoicing.

And yet something inside myself, perhaps my innate scepticism, tells me that all this is too good to be true. The snag is not in the institution, but in the human quality of the new generation. I have watched them ever since they arrived—these stumpy, dumpy girls with their rather coarse features, big buttocks and heavy breasts, physically precocious, mentally retarded, over-ripe and immature at the same time : and these raw, arse-slapping youngsters, callow, dumb and heavy, with their aggressive laughter and unmodulated voices, without traditions, manners, form, style. . . .

Their parents were the most cosmopolitan race of the earth—they are provincial and chauvinistic. Their parents were sensitive bundles of nerves with awkward bodies—their nerves are whip-cords and their bodies those of a horde of Tarzans roaming in the hills of Galilee. Their parents were intense, intent, over-strung, over-spiced—they are tasteless, spiceless, unleavened and tough. . . .

Impressed by such outbursts, the reader who has not been to Palestine may not notice that the book hardly adumbrates the case against Zionism in its present developments. This case is in no way based upon anti-Semitism. Indeed many of the most convinced anti-Zionists are Jews and proud of the fact, Jews who see in a Zionist State a deadly danger for the majority of Jews—for all indeed who prefer to live elsewhere.

Occasionally Mr. Koestler's zeal allows him to put into the mouth of a character some statement that is simply untrue—such as that the Jews pay all the taxes. (On the other hand it is perfectly true that the taxation they do pay is quite disproportionate to either their numbers or their wealth.) But far more misleading are the assumptions on which, without any discussion of them, the book is based ; and something must be said about these.

First Mr. Koestler takes for granted that the promise of ' a National Home ' entailed a Palestinian State with a majority of the inhabitants Jews. (He says even that Feisal at one moment welcomed the future Jewish State. There is controversy about what he did welcome and upon what conditions : it certainly was not a *State*.) Nothing is said here about the stipulation that the rights of the Arabs should be respected. The terrorist in the book proclaims truly : ' Once we have the majority, the rest is easy.' What ' the rest ' may be it is not hard to imagine ! Mr. Koestler takes it for granted that we have the moral right to impose on the Palestinian Arabs immigrants on a scale

we should not consider admitting ourselves. The Jews now number roughly one third of the population of Palestine. It is as if England had admitted fourteen million during the last twenty-five years.

Similarly Mr. Koestler seems to take it for granted that all the Jews who have come to Palestine wish to remain there. There is no mention of the sharp division between those to whom Zion is the country of their dreams and those who, having escaped to it, long only to establish themselves in a more civilised country. A considerable proportion of the Jews in Palestine belong to this latter category.

If Mr. Koestler has passed in silence over the matters discussed in the preceding two paragraphs, it is perhaps because he supposes them to be common knowledge. But his bias seems to me undeniable when he goes on to assume that the British have been consistently pro-Arab and anti-Jew. It is true of course that the British think a limit should be set to immigration. But without their support there would have been no immigration at all. As it is, they have gained the enmity of the Arabs as well as of the Jews, which at least suggests that they have not entirely failed in impartiality and justice. If it were possible to be just to the one without being unjust to the other, the question would long since have been solved. 'To see both sides is a luxury we can no longer afford.' This saying of a terrorist in *Thieves in the Night* comes near to being adopted by Mr. Koestler.

The book may be thought to devote most disproportionate attention to the communities. These include only some 6 per cent. of the Jews in Palestine, more than three-quarters of whom live in cities. It may well be that Mr. Koestler intends to treat of these in a sequel to the present book, which does not so much end as suddenly stop. Meanwhile, some readers may imagine that the communities, which are the most interesting feature of Zionist life, are also numerically important.

I have felt obliged to point out certain gaps in the picture presented by Mr. Koestler; and if he had filled these gaps himself, I believe that informed readers would be more impressed by the case he presents. But the propagandist is usually the first to be deluded by his own partiality: having written so disobligingly about the Jews, Mr. Koestler probably is convinced that his whole book is objective.

No one can doubt that *Thieves in the Night* is inspired by a passionate idealism. But is it not deplorable that Mr. Koestler, in a world still bleeding from year after year of violence, and himself having been the victim of violence, should seem, through his hero, to accept violence as the right policy for the Zionists? In *Darkness at Noon* and again in *Scum of the Earth* he made most eloquent and convincing attacks on the principle that the end justifies the means. Now he apparently accepts the terrorists' argument: 'We have to use violence and deception, to save others from violence and deception.'

But can he really think that it is right (or even politic) for Jews to murder the British soldiers and administrators who have the misfortune to be sent to Palestine? No people has treated its Jewish citizens better than the British. Even the social discrimination against them that elsewhere sometimes shows itself—for instance, in American clubs—has no place in England. And for a year the British were alone in fighting the people who included in their war aims the total extermination of Jewry. They do not ask for gratitude: they were fighting, like all their allies, first and foremost in self-defence. But they might have expected not to be assassinated by those who but for them would have been consigned to gas chambers, whether they lived in Europe or in Asia.

It may be that Mr. Koestler does not, in spite of appearances, agree with his hero's support of terrorism. If so, he should have stated the fact in a foreword: there is no hint to this effect in the text. If I have misrepresented his views, he has only himself to blame.

Though Mr. Koestler thinks that he has no illusions about the Zionists, his Zionism, like his Communism, may end in disillusionment. In him the critic is always at the heels of the zealot; and his loyalty—and this is proof of an intellectual integrity against which he sometimes offends—his loyalty is to no abiding place on earth. At the end of *Thieves in the Night* he describes the Jews in terms that apply eminently to himself:

We shall always be betrayed because something in us asks to be betrayed. There is this urge in us for the return to earth and normality; and there is that other urge to continue the hunt for a lost Paradise which is not in space. This is our predicament. But it is not a question of race. It is the human predicament carried to its extreme.

Lemanian May

BY JOHN RUSSELL

The attraction of the Lake of Geneva is perhaps more readily felt than explained. How otherwise could one take so kindly to this great sulky pan of water, this kidney-bean laid upon the map of Europe? Other lakes have more delicate attractions and a more evenly tolerable climate. Annecy is more civilised; others besides Wordsworth have been bemused by the 'orange gale that o'er Lugano blows'; and for those who see landscape in terms of the theatre, there are the perpendicular excitements of the Walensee. The Lake of Thün is more private; and the lakes of the Campagna still recollect the cheesy gold of Richard Wilson's pigment. Nobody has ever gone very closely into those diffuse and contestable assertions by which, between 1760 and 1820, the name of Lac Leman was hoisted above the reach of reasoned comment. Rousseau himself is now more studied in the lecture-room than in the heart; and although Byron and Shelley have still the warmth of minor suns, I doubt if many a visitor to Clarens now tilts his burning-glass in their direction, or catches fire from the suggestion that in this midge-ridden resort even the trees

... take root in love; the snows above,
The very glaciers have his colours caught,
And the sunset into rose-hues sees them wrought
By rays which sleep there lovingly.

Of course this lingering pink is, as it happens, a permanent and much-prized feature of Veveyan sunsets; but its amorous connotation is no longer insisted upon, and Byron himself, five years after his visit, seems to have considered it no more than a rhetorical courtesy. When, indeed, an acquaintance called upon him at the Palazzo Lanfranchi in Pisa, where he was coasting along upon a diet of claret and soda-water, he went so far as to say that one visit to Switzerland was enough for a lifetime. 'I never led so moral a life,' he complained, 'as during my residence in that country; but I gained no credit by it. On the contrary, there is no story so absurd that they did not invent at my cost. I was watched by glasses on the other side of the lake . . . I was waylaid in my evening drives . . . I was accused of corrupting all the grisettes in the Rue Basse'; in short . . . 'they looked upon me as a man-monster, worse than the *piqueur*.' Be that as it may, poetic signals of discovery went up all through the nineteenth century; and when it was Matthew Arnold's turn to extol

That much-loved inland sea,
The ripples of whose blue waves cheer
Vevey and Meillerie—

the elegist of Cumnor and Bablockhythe was able to evoke some of the facts of landscape which, from 1790 onwards, had been smothered beneath the great blanket-ideas of Liberty and Revolution. An early poem, for instance, fills out the picture of an Alpine track with the information that

Behind are the abandoned baths,
Mute in their meadows lone ;

and in middle life Arnold reverted with minute devotion to the specific pleasures of a walk below Glion—the husks, fresh-heaped and burning, beneath the chestnut-trees, the new-cut grasses, and the meadows blue with *Gentiana Lutea*. All the same, poets are fickle and spasmodic guides, and I at least would give all Coleridge's passionate vocatives, and his allusions to 'thy bald awful head, O sovran Blanc,' for a good prose narrative, well dug and dredged.

Such a one exists, moreover. Vine-bordered, moody, and large, Lac Lemman has been anatomised once and for all by Professor F. A. Forel. Her least variations of temper and appearance found in him, for more than fifty years, a registrar at once genial and exact. All travellers carry within themselves an obstreperous committee of specialist observers ; unnoticed at home, these become vocal at the first sight of new ground. Lac Lemman calls out the full resources of this inward cabal ; but the hydrologer, the chemist, the fisherman, the naval historian, the seismographer and the glutton will find that M. Forel has forestalled their questions ; and if they wish to consult this pantomath they have only to descend to the lower galleries of the London Library and there, squatting on the iron grille, to dust, cut and read his three volumes. Among writers on Switzerland, M. Forel has a place of his own. Where so many are visiting amateurs, he bears the mark of the native professional. Hugo and Lamartine can hoarsen themselves, after the fashion of their age, and sedentary persons may marvel at the medicinal exertions of Sir Leslie Stephen, or of Mr. Smythe and Mr. Lunn. The discreet passion of M. Forel finds a different outlet. In London, his pages give sometimes the effect of an almost English reserve ; only, indeed, in the presence of the lake itself can one seize the full gravity and independence of his art ; only in the face of its over-demonstrative scenery can one measure his zeal. Nature herself exaggerates in this quarter ; only Man—or more exactly, only M. Forel—is above suspicion. When he remarks, of this grandiose and mercurial pond, that it has a volume of 88,920 million cubic metres, a maximum depth of some 950 feet, and an area of 582 square kilometres, the figures have the air of an

abstraction ; but they have their place in his grand design. All travellers can profit by his work ; and when one looks at the 'Pêche Miraculeuse' in which, more than five centuries ago, Konrad Witz adapted the New Testament to the landscape of Lac Lemman, one can hardly credit that M. Forel was not at hand in 1444 to advise upon the authentic speed of the currents off Thonon.

The lake is best encountered at one of its extremities. One may choose to debouch at Villeneuve, where the delta of the Rhone widens among water-green marshes, loud with frogs. To the east, the gaunt secrecies of the Valais stretch on towards Sion and Martigues ; here an unsmiling peasantry wears the goitre like a national badge, and as for the theory put forward by Senancour ('Rien n'est si rare dans la plus grande partie de la Suisse qu'un beau sein . . . beaucoup de femmes du pays n'en ont pas même l'idée'), there would be small reason to question it here. From the delta itself, a primitive pier-head leads out towards open water. Wild flowers sweeten its cobbles, and around the dead body of a swan flies converse in the undertone of connoisseurs. The general prospect is undeniably grand, and may be enhanced by timely sampling of the wine of the neighbourhood. The intake of the Rhone affords M. Forel one of his best-elaborated themes. Roman historians had inferred from the great pace of the Rhone, and the relative heaviness of its waters, that the parent river passed through the lake without mingling its stream with the general mass. Strabo even gave ignorance an Ovidian embellishment by comparing the scene to the fountains of Arethusa, and the fast-flowing Rhone to the magical Alpheus, which retained its freshness even after a passage beneath the sea. Disrespect for the credulities of Marcellinus, Pomponius Mela and the elder Pliny disputed, in the mind of M. Forel, with loyalty to the special qualities of the lake. With the aid of his patent water-spectacles he gazed fixedly at the point where the heavy and opaque water of the reinforcing river first loses its momentum ; and with the eye of a Courbet he watched how the darker stream 'breaks up into large greasy bobbles or oval clouds, which form a kind of moving staircase as they slowly sink down through the clear water of the lake.'

If, again, one first sees the lake from the quays of Geneva, a very different spectacle obtains. In summer the many sluices in the harbour give to each bridge a cooling beard of green and silver ; no pavements are hotter than those of Geneva, but all walks through the town must take at length a downward turn, and at last one hears, perhaps at a hundred paces, the assuaging susurrus of the Rhone. Listen for a moment to the comparable jet of Ruskin's eloquence. 'Fifteen feet thick, of not flowing, but flying water ; not water, neither—melted glacier, one should call it ; the force of the ice is with it, and the wreathing of the clouds, the gladness of the sky, and

the continuance of Time. . . . Here was one mighty wave that was always itself, and every fluted swirl of it, constant as the wreathing of a shell . . . alike through bright day and lulling night, the never-pausing plunge, and never-fading flash, and never-hushing whisper, and, while the sun was up, the ever-answering glow of unearthly aquamarine, ultramarine, violet-blue, gentian-blue, peacock-blue, river-of-paradise blue . . .

Geneva has changed since Ruskin's day, and though one can still drive over the ledges of the Salève, aglow with primrose and soldanelle, the furniture of the lake itself has much altered. The 'raft-like flat feluccas' and the 'filiform suspension bridge' are gone; and in their stead the traveller crosses upon solid granite and later, pacing the Edwardian frontage of the north bank, finds himself beneath the sharp beaks of the tethered lake-steamers. The line of these suggests an arrowy swiftness very different from the stealth and labour with which, once a week during the season, they convey their moist Sunday freight of strangers on holiday. But these boats are newcomers, and M. Forel takes no account of them. On the other hand he is warm, decidedly warm about the ship-money imposed in 1375 by Amedee VI of Savoy, and he tells us that in 1606 Villeneuve stood at only twelve hours' rowing-distance from Geneva. (The great skill of these professional oarsmen survives, I believe, in the amateur crews, based upon Lausanne, which so surprisingly style themselves 'Les Merry Boys.') In the eighteenth century the ships of the Bernese Navy, with their armoured sides, lacquered pavilions and huge, new-varnished bear-mascots in the bows, plied their ornamental way along Lac Lemman, and mock-battles took place in Geneva roads. These are vanished sights, and rank with the 'fête of Navigation' which, in August 1849, George Eliot was pleased to enjoy. An excess of rowing made her ill afterwards, but she thought the spectacle quite worth it—'the mingling of the silver and the golden rays on the rippled lake, the bright colours of the boats, the music, the splendid fireworks, and the pale moon looking at it all with a sort of grave surprise, made up a scene of perfect enchantment.' Four years earlier her contemporary Flaubert had lodged for a day or two on the Promenade St. Antoine, and recorded a less sociable nocturne. Solitary and bearish at that time, he had taken himself and his cigar to the small public garden in which Pradier's Rousseau sits. A wind band had been playing; flute and trombone aroused in him the mirage of success, the 'tremors of fame'; he sat on until it grew cold and the audience slipped away, one by one, from the benches.

Geneva has in many ways never been less of a dead city. One of the last museums of solid middle-class living, it has the instantaneous attraction of a large and beautiful town in perfect physical health. The present is what matters, for the first week at least; and to the

present M. Forel is still a good guide. He is particularly sound on winds, which so largely mould the climate of Lac Leman. He evokes, with the skill of a novelist, their varying characters until, for example, the night-walking Morget, the centrifugal, onshore Rebat and the powerful and deleterious Sudois assume the familiarity of characters from the *Forsyte Saga* or *Les Hommes de Bonne Volonté*. In two other cases, these winds attain an almost Balzacian will and independence. In literature, as in life, the lugubrious and insistent Bise du Nord dominates the scene with its cold, damp and regular breathing. Towards the Rhone delta the Vaudois offers a mere enlivening commentary upon lakeside existence, for this hot, dry wind, with its sudden and authoritative arrivals and departures, is a great traveller, refreshed and exhilarated by its passage across the Alps. Much of the emotional ambience of Lac Leman should be ascribed to these agents of ecstasy and despair. The extremes of passion, for instance, in Rousseau's *Julie*: does not Saint-Preux speak of the 'cold bise' which has brought down the ice and snow? 'All nature is dying before my eyes,' he writes, 'and with it dies the hope in my heart.' A few miles further west, this damaging comparison might never have occurred to him. But for the bise, Julie and Saint-Preux and Mylord Edouard Bomston could have got out more; stuffing indoors, and writing all those letters, they erected a local climatic misfortune into a first principle of the heart. M. Forel is more matter-of-fact.

To the natural historian, Lac Leman has no great appeal. M. Forel loyally names the shrew-mouse, the plover, the stork and the coot, among other visitors to the area, but in general it is the odd and the irregular which catches his eye—an interesting case of suicide among frogs, for instance, or the involuntary visits of otters to the harbour area of Geneva. In 1837 swans were introduced to the lake at the whim of a bus-conductor, who brought two of them from Paris. The descendants of this hardy and fecund pair now ornament the whole length of the lake. With the air of a man noting the dates of Ascot or Goodwood, M. Forel remarks that 'their caresses may be observed from the 5th to the 20th of March.' From time to time he observed, and noted in the interests of learning, curious instances of sexual precocity and corruption among these swans; and he may have had hopes of finding a similar deplorable inventiveness among tortoises. But alas! The anti-scientific attitude of certain Venetian merchants rendered such studies quite fruitless; from 1845 onwards they imported so many of these creatures that the aboriginal tortoise, native to the Rhone marshes, could no longer be distinguished. Driven under water by this disappointment, M. Forel researched with more success into the lake's fine complement of fish. The delicious perch, so welcome upon Genevese tables, was the object of particular attention. The sociable young perchettes assume in his narrative the

ambivalent allure of *jeunes filles en fleur*; and as for the lonely and philosophical adults, each one a finny Thoreau beside his chosen boulder, they provide a rare point of repose in this agitated area. The bull-head, the ablet and the bleak cannot wrest our affection from the speciality of Lac Lemman—the delicate féra. To this most tender of fish, all other waters are mortal; and he can only be best enjoyed when, secure in his buttery overcoat, he is eaten within earshot of the lake. A respectful ear must be cocked to M. Forel's story of the blind shrimp, or *Niphargus Foreli*, which lives in the perpetual darkness of the lowest depths of the lake. The worm peculiar to the area, the *Bythonomus Lemani*, may be left to more specialised tastes; most readers, I feel sure, will take it, its transparent skin and its 40-62 segments on trust. It is quite otherwise with the creature most summarily treated by M. Forel—Man; our teacher's powers of embrace, elsewhere more reminiscent of the panther or grizzly bear than of the savant, seem here to have failed him. Man's case is even worse than that of the tortoise—so great and so constant has been the admixture of foreign strains. This may however be precisely the point of most interest for many of those who are attracted by Lac Lemman and happen one day to alight upon its super-serviceable shores.

* * *

In a letter dated March 1819, and written to his sister Fanny, Keats described the ideal, the paradisaical life for a goldfish. Safe in an enormous bowl of ever-changing water, embowered in myrtle and japonica, the fortunate fish was to peer out through a handsome painted window. 'I should like the window to open on to the Lake of Geneva,' Keats went on, 'and then I'd sit and read all day, like the picture of somebody reading.' Keats never went to Switzerland, and could not have gauged the distracting power of his chosen landscape. The importunate grandeur of the scene had, in his time, a correlative in human affairs. Over-excited republicans and gasping pantheists found, once and for all, a landscape perfectly accommodated to their state of mind. Love and liberty were decidedly the things that mattered most; and Lamartine, in his '*Ressouvenir du Lemman*,' spoke for every foreign visitor:

L'amour, la liberté, ces alcyons du monde,
Combien de fois ont-ils pris leur vol sur ton onde,
Ou confié leur nid à tes flots transparents?

These large, flat sentiments are now without meaning; and the landscape which inspired them can be at times so potently and intimately tedious that the visitor feels within himself a great heave of boredom and impatience, comparable to the *seiches* or mysterious rhythmic disturbances which agitate the lake itself. At these moments,

illustrious blacklegs come to mind : Gérard de Nerval, remarking that at Lausanne even the steeples were awkward and provincial : Voltaire, sticking out a damp winter at Prangins and declaring that, furred, booted and caulked as he was, he was none the less dying of rage and cold. Stendhal, however, could not but make a gesture of admiration as he stood off Vevey in the steam-packet *Aigle*. The great height of the mountains which, with their dark woods, tore down towards the lake at an angle of perhaps sixty degrees, gave to the scene a quality of instantaneous tragedy ; but the foreground was dull, he thought, and not comparable to the lakes of Lombardy. Life on the *Aigle* had other defects—gaseous lemonade, a surfeit of Calvinist tracts, and the naturally glum and unyielding manners of the Genevois. Even the occupational gaiety of sailors was not proof against this local chill and constraint. The Italian amenities so rightly dear to Stendhal were still rarer on shore, but he tried hard to find subjects for amiable comment. The system of government, for instance, had a likably paternal element in it ; and though he could not warm to Calvin or to the variant of English methodism which seemed to have taken hold in Geneva, he noted that it did at least solve one serious problem—the answer to which, in his view, would decide, one way or another, the nature of twentieth-century civilisation. Democracy and an authoritarian religion were incompatible aims ; and, between these two, Calvin had effected a working compromise. Like Gibbon, Stendhal was teased and held captive by the closed, autonomous societies in which unmarried girls were allowed to lead lives of their own—‘trusted to their own prudence,’ in Gibbon’s phrase, ‘among a crowd of young men of every nation in Europe.’ These eminent, hard-working, but on the whole strikingly unsuccessful flirts were both transfixed by the delicate possibilities of such a system ; but long residence in Switzerland forced Gibbon to concede that ‘the invisible line between liberty and licentiousness was never transgressed by a gesture, a word, or a look . . . a singular institution, expressive of the innocent simplicity of Swiss manners.’ But when all this had been said, Geneva was still the city pinned down by Voltaire in a single line :

On y calcule et jamais on n’y rit.

Its people were rich, but with no power of enjoying their wealth ; well read, but not enlightened ; cheerless and prudent in their recreations ; and in the cast of their minds emphatic, reasonable and sad. The delicious fact of sex had for them the remoteness of a Roman epitaph. Their pleasures, obvious and inexpensive, were those of German peasants ; and in their earnest but undexterous appreciation of literature there was something—yes, that was it !—something almost English. Regnard, for instance, was unintelligible

to both doltish tribes ; and both would prefer the melancholy of Jacques to that of Alceste.

Lac Lemman itself has defects of taste and emphasis, but a short excursion towards the Jura will supply the antithesis of these in ample measure. The road to Ferney is a well-beaten one, and its dust has settled upon many an eminent foot. In 1806, when Benjamin Constant went there, it was already a place of pilgrimage, and he found that Voltaire's old servant was doing her best to ensure that, in death as in life, her master should be controversial matter. She felt sure that he had been poisoned ; but she herself died soon afterwards and when, in 1837, Sainte-Beuve paid a devotional call, only an aged gardener remained from the old wizard's twenty-two servants. Nine years later, Flaubert was able to enjoy the house without any distraction. For more than a century now, Ferney has profited by being a truly private house, exempt from the daily erosion of quality and character which is the fate of museums. Even a spell of German occupation could not spoil it ; possibly the relics of its sly and cadaverous owner had still some magical power to dissolve stupidity and pride.

From the French frontier the road stretches ahead through fields very like the flattest, wettest part of Leicestershire. Nothing can be seen of Ferney village, and the route has no landmarks, except perhaps a derelict motor-coach from which thrifty persons have removed the wheels, upholstery and lamps. As one approaches the town, the first traces of Voltaire's beneficence appear ; for one could say of him that he found Ferney wattle and left it brick. Most of its houses were built by him ; and where there had been a wretched hamlet of mindless peasants, he quickly created a prosperous small town, whose craftsmen worked to order for customers from London to Bengal. At the château itself he worked from five in the morning until ten in the evening, while superfluous towers were razed and walls of clipped hornbeam planted in their place. Marble was brought by water across the lake, and he gave special attention to his experimental stud-farm. He saw himself as, variously, a blind mole, a shepherd out of Hesiod, a husbandman on leave from the Georgics, and an old rat withdrawn from the world in the recesses of a Swiss cheese. He built a church, and a theatre, and several pleasure-houses—pavilions worthy of Meudon and Saint-Cloud. He lay in bed until noon, and he halved the price of salt.

As one turns off the main road and walks up to the house, other English visitors come to mind—Mr. Sherlock, for instance, librarian to the Earl of Bristol. He called in the spring of 1776, and found his host in 'a grizzle-wig with three ties,' and a silk nightcap embroidered in gold and silver. When they went out into the garden, Voltaire had on shoes of white cloth, white woollen stockings, and

red breeches, with a night-gown and waistcoat of blue linen, flowered and lined with yellow. He claimed that his garden was in the English taste. In his excitement Sherlock forgot much of the talk, but when he got back to his inn he did remember that the old man had 'said some shocking things against Moses and Shakespeare.' In the library, Voltaire was at pains to show the range of his English reading. 'Robertson is your Livy,' he suddenly asserted; and 'Addison's *Cato* is incomparably well written.' Horace Walpole's *Historic Doubts* had been well thumbed, but in Bolingbroke Voltaire found 'many leaves, and little fruit'; from Roscommon, on the other hand, he quoted from memory the provocative couplet:

The weighty bullion of one sterling line,
Drawn to French wire, would through whole pages shine.

The great patron of the alexandrine remarked, too, that the English in their speech were 'energetic, precise and barbarous.' And while the liveried footmen carried in the silver and the plate, Voltaire resumed his attacks upon Shakespeare—'a man who would do anything to get money.'

The French of Beaumarchais is still spoken at Ferney; and by this musical speech, as much as by the portraits of Clairon and Lekain which still hang on the walls of Voltaire's bedroom, one is reminded of his passion for the theatre, and for the great extensions and elaborations of language for which the stage gives occasion. The best actors of a great age for the theatre excelled themselves in Voltaire's rôles; within living memory Salvini made a success of *Zaire*, and Turgenev knew long speeches from the plays by heart; but today his plays seem stiff and cold, and we can hardly picture the discipular zeal with which Gibbon, among many others, would race across country to see them performed. There was something of snobbery in these audiences, something of sociability, and something of a pious or morbid wish to hear the aged poet cackling his way, perhaps for the last time, through *Alzire* or *Zulime*. For Voltaire himself they were pure carnival. There was nothing he enjoyed more; and it was with, at most, a false gesture of regret that he reached for the cothurnus and the buskin. 'The children and the neighbours' were his excuse, and the agreeable stir of homage his reward. In August 1763, when he played Genghis-Khan in 'L'Orphelin de la Chine,' he was an old man, and could pardonably have been a tired one. He had been immoderately active all summer; a case of Popish injustice had taken up much of his time; his eyes troubled him; he had been busy stoking up Marmontel's claim to a vacant place in the Académie; and his dramatic ambitions allowed him no peace. In twelve days he had knocked off a tragedy of Roman life. Full of coarse realism, in 'the English taste,' it shirked none of the implications of Augustus' epigram, which begins

Quod fuit Glaphyram Antonius, hanc mihi poenam
Fulvia constituit, se quoque uti futuam.

Le Triumvirat had all the elements, he thought, of a Drury Lane success ; for French audiences some pruning might be needed. There was, among the hundred-odd visitors who came to hear 'L'Orphelin de la Chine,' a person of Mongolian origin who assured Voltaire that he and Gengis-Khan were as alike as two peas, and that his gestures had been in the true Tartar style. He was delighted with this tribute, and repeated it to those who remained to supper and afterwards danced until four o'clock in the morning. Among the trophies of Ferney, the portraits of Frederick the Great and Catherine of Russia, the busts of Newton and Locke, the copies of Italian masters and the porcelain stove, is the circlet of laurel with which Voltaire was crowned on his last visit to Paris ; *Irène*, the pretext for this homage, has now fallen out of the repertory, and at Ferney the theatre has been pulled down and the church has the air of a drill-hall far gone in disuse ; but the house itself, and the neat acres of the property, have even on a wet Sunday the prestige and the shimmering excitement of a great staging-point in the history of intelligence.

Not all the guests on that August evening were as happy as their host. One at least was miserable, and another vexed and uneasy. Gibbon had not thought to see Suzanne Curchod at Ferney, and he was not at all pleased at the encounter. He had never managed to press home his early acquaintance with Voltaire ; he was twenty-six, and inclined to view society as campaigning-ground on which one either advanced, or fell back in disgrace. He had already given Mademoiselle Curchod her *congé* in terms which still cause Swiss editors to rise in her defence ; and now she appeared just when he was most enjoying himself ! It was really too bad ; and Mademoiselle Curchod was ill-equipped to make it seem any better. (Even some years later, when Marmontel met her as Madame Necker, he found her 'unfortunate in her dress, uneasy in her demeanour, unwinning in her civilities, and, alike in her face and her conversation, too artificial to give any effect of charm.') These defects of surface irritated Gibbon beyond endurance ; and when, some seven weeks later, she could bear to discuss the incident, Mademoiselle Curchod declared that she had been 'so intimidated and broken down by your continual feint of forced gaiety and your hard-hearted replies that the trembling of my lips prevented me from speaking. You as good as told me that you were ashamed of the way I behaved.' No doubt he was odious ; but if he had yielded to her plotting, she would have missed the great happiness of her life with Necker, and we should have missed Madame de Staël. We should also not have had Coppet.

Coppet has, over Ferney, advantages of rank and favour. Necker spared no expense which might dignify his chosen ark ; his barns

are big enough for Gloucestershire, and on his roofs the tiles have ripened like peaches. The house itself is recognisably a country house, but with the formality, the well-spaced, well-shuttered windows and the ceremonious chimney-stacks of a Parisian *hôtel* of the period. Flights of gates, with good ironwork and substantial piers, lead the eye inwards; and on the garden front the sweet roundness of a feudal tower has been absorbed into the general idea of a great Minister's seat. Today everything at Coppet has, in larger measure, the quality remarked by Sainte-Beuve in 1837—that of a little Versailles bereft of its fêtes; its grasses are taller, its waters more glassy, and the shade of its walks deeper and more cobwebby than ever. It is easy to bring to the house and its park the ears of Fauré or the eyes of Hubert Robert—easier perhaps than to describe it with the voice of Proust, and to murmur aside that ‘il est exquis d’arriver à Coppet par une journée amortie et dorée d’automne, quand les vignes sont d’or sur le lac encore bleu . . .’ Nothing now disturbs the long farewell of its overgrown alleys, and there is little to suggest that the deserted house was once a cock-pit for the best intelligences of Europe; one can lie for hours in the long grass without courting the fate of Gaetano Catruffo who, while similarly engaged, found himself the uneasy spectator, at three paces, of a quarrel such as his hostess alone knew how to conduct. Catruffo, by profession a composer of Maltese opera buffa, may well have felt nervous indoors, for the routine of the day was remote from Mediterranean convention. The first general meal was taken at eleven in the morning, and thenceforward Madame de Staël drew without mercy upon the talent and experience of her guests until midnight when, in the words of one regular guest, ‘one either went to bed, or one had to go on talking.’ At table the chatelaine would direct the conversation with the aid of a newly-cut twig from the garden. Once in play with this leafy baton, she would defer only to her father; other men could fight their way out. It is difficult now to recapture the tremors with which men made their way into her company. Much must be added, for instance, to the posthumous portrait by Gerard; and Madame Lebrun’s version, with its lyre-bird motif, must have seemed odd to those who had endured Madame de Staël’s furious dissection of political subjects. By some surplus of magic, she imposed herself as the woman of the age; this she achieved equally in the case of those who knew her intimately, and of those who, many years later, found that her behaviour during the Revolution was that of a heroine of ancient times. Even the Duke of Wellington, who must have advanced towards her a breast-work of the hardest teak, admitted that ‘she was a most agreeable woman, if you only kept her light, and away from politics.’ The sustained masculine tone of her talk was balanced, in intimate relations, by coquetry upon a prodigious scale. The

advance and withdrawal of her attachments was marked by terrible disputes. Benjamin Constant records how he had to wait, almost as if in a queue, until at one or two in the morning he could get in to have his turn. No man, it is clear, could ever take her father's place; Constant would eye with mounting irritation the extraordinary zoo which gathered every evening to pay homage to the woman who might have been, among other things, the consort of the younger Pitt. Her family had missed, indeed, a connection with more than one great Englishman; but Madame de Staël seemed not to regret this. She and Constant saw Gibbon with the eyes of a younger, post-Revolutionary generation. They got out his letters to her mother and laughed together at what seemed to them the affected and ridiculous style of his love-making; the element of purposeful refrigeration is perhaps more obvious to us. When she looked at Gibbon she wondered if she would ever have sprung from such curious loins, and decided that Necker alone could have brought off the feat. Gibbon himself was not above judging his hosts at Coppet, and took comfort from the poor ruined piece of political humanity who pottered inconsolably about his demesne. 'With all the means of private happiness in his power,' he wrote to Sheffield, 'he is the most miserable of human beings.' And Coppet has retained some trace of the ennui, the weight of sad comparisons with which it was loaded both by Necker and by his daughter. The natural beauties of the scene were nothing to her; and on her walks by the lake one may feel sure that, if pleased at all, she was

Pleased rather with some soft ideal scene,
The work of Fancy—

and one can even guess its location. When she was in exile and forbidden to approach within a wide radius from Paris, she would dart angrily from one perimeter-town to another—from Auxerre to Châlons, from Blois to Saumur—until at last she dared to hide in Paris itself, coming out only at night to walk along the moonlit streets.

Madame de Staël had learnt as a young girl the art of mastering herself with the help of the classical authors. Cato (in Addison's translation), Tacitus and Plutarch had saved her from any extremity of despair during the Revolution; and during the years at Coppet—relatively the slackwater of her life—theatrical ventures provided the greatest release for her energies. A pupil of Clairon, she could incarnate, in the tragedies of Voltaire and Racine, all the largeness of sentiment and the animal vitality of which nobody, in so-called 'real life,' had been able to take full charge. Thus Coppet, as much as Ferney, became a house of rendezvous for connoisseurs of acting. Others besides the Phèdre or the Hermione of the evening took

pleasure in the work ; Constant, for instance, looked forward to the oburgations which fell to him as Zopire in *Merope*. People would stand for seven hours in the narrow library for the privilege of watching so curious a scene. A century of Broglies and d'Haussonvilles has since given to Coppet the savour of a polite and learned society—a world in which, as Proust was pleased to compute, the Princesse de Beauvau and the Comtesse de Talleyrand would motor over from Lausanne, the Princesse de Caraman-Chimay would come from Amphion and the Comtesse Greffulhe would stop for an hour on her way to Lucerne. But a solitary winter-visitor might pause in the flagged hall and seem to overhear, in the adjoining room, the accents in which, through the intermediary of Racine, Madame de Staël echoed the secret of an earlier seductress. 'C'est moi, Prince,' she is saying—and with the words she leads us down to the inmost zone of her being—

C'est moi dont l'utile secours

Vous eût du Labyrinthe enseigné les détours.

Racine's labyrinth is known to us now as a warren of sexual tunnels, the more terrifying for the posed deliberation of his narrative ; but we need not follow Madame de Staël as, swathed in her statutory purple, she crosses its boundary ; for our own present pleasures we have to tread more kindly mazes.

Only the *train-omnibus* stops at Coppet, but the high road through the little town bears throughout the year a frieze of *café-au-lait* roadsters, hot and tarry from their chase along the open country between Geneva and Lausanne. The train is perhaps better suited to this shelving orchard-country. From its open windows one can watch the revolving hoses cast rainbows, in the shape of a scythe or an hour-glass, above lawns of English perfection ; and one glimpses the watery parks in which lie houses such as Prangins and Doregny, houses embalmed in the lavender and verbena of the First Empire ; on the higher slopes, beneath the wooded Jura, the parks have other features—deserted bell-towers, fountains, and terraces which step down through rich, well-cultivated land. By the lake are tiny harbours, built like the pincers of a crab, each with its arbour of plane-trees, cropped umbrella-wise. This is good country for schools, and in the hills above the lake tubby belles, the pride of Didsbury and Edgbaston, totter from the ping-pong table to the swimming pool, or construe passages from Romain and Duhamel.

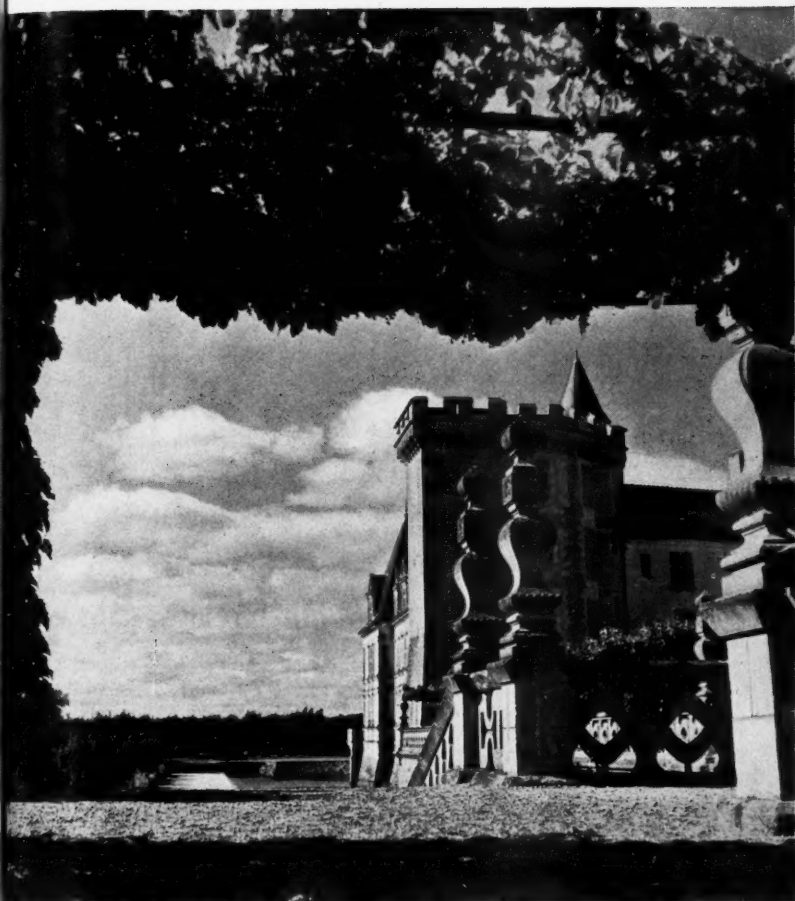
As the train passes behind Morges, with its Renaissance church and part-time hippodrome, it is agreeable to recall that this landscape can still act as nursemaid to great enterprises. For at Morges, in 1918, Stravinsky and C. F. Ramuz composed that pocket masterpiece, 'L'Histoire d'un Soldat.' Ramuz is of course the veteran laureate of the area, but Stravinsky has also an old allegiance to the Leman ;

in 1908, while walking along its banks, he conceived the idea of *Petrouchka*; later, he worked with Ravel at Clarens and with Diaghilev at Lausanne; and in 1918, in a time of penury and distress, he had grafted onto a fable of Afanasiev the precise and exacting score of the *Soldat*. Directed, as always, by Ernest Ansermet, this unique entertainment is sometimes revived at Lausanne. On such occasions the tiny band is placed, as Stravinsky decrees, upon the stage, and its members surmount, with varying degrees of equanimity, the prodigious hardships of their task. As for the illustrious chef (I owe to the "Gazette de Lausanne" this just, if at first baffling appellation)—only by an occasional scratch at his leg does he suggest that the score may be more difficult than that of 'Let's All Go To the Ball-Game.'

Lausanne itself is holy ground for literary persons. Gibbon's *berceau* has disappeared beneath the foundations of a gargantuan post-office, but many streets and houses known to him may still be traced, and there is even the possibility, most enticing to literary truffle-hounds, of finding in some *antiquaire* a book from his library. Of his attachment to the town it would be impertinent for me to speak, for Gibbon himself (newly supported by the Editor of the CORNHILL MAGAZINE) has done this to perfection. Nor is Lausanne, in general, a town for nostalgia. The Lausannois is too intent upon the present, too pleased with the transient bloom of health which gives even the plainest Swiss girl a moment of attraction; to the visitor the life of the town appears uniformly brisk. The funicular climbs up and down in its pebbly trough; on the tennis-courts green-visored professionals are for ever breaking into another box of balls from Slazenger's; oarsmen, bicyclists, skiers and *basketteurs enragés* comprise nearly all the adult population. Peak-capped undergraduates enhance the scene; and unless, like Charles-Albert Cingria, one explores the low quarters of the town in search of the underground source of the Flon one may fancy that the heart of Lausanne is in the gymnasium, or in the delicious confectioner's in the rue du Bourg, or in the dogs' cemetery which lies beneath the ancient cedars of the Beau-Rivage. At Nyfenhegger's a select public nibbles its *foie-gras* sandwiches or hovers above the strawberry tarts which have been flown, this very morning, from somewhere south of the Alps. Down by the lake, in the quarter given over, as Cingria says, to cinders, swans and railway-lines, it is possible for English visitors to sit undisturbed, sampling the wine of the neighbourhood; nothing, indeed, more aptly concludes a day by the Lemman than this harmless reversion to Byronic practice.

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CHATEAU DE VILLANDRY, NEAR TOURS : BUILT BY
AN LE BRETON, SECRETARY OF STATE TO FRANÇOIS I

Three French Chateaux

Photographs by A. Costa

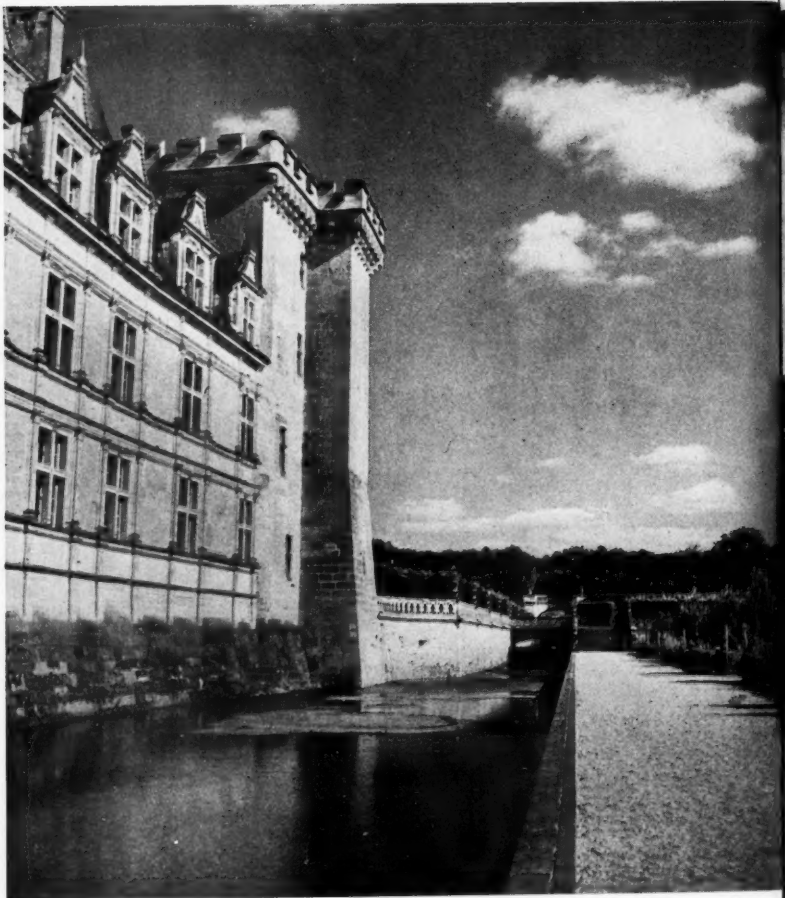


CHATEAU DE VILLANDRY

TEAU



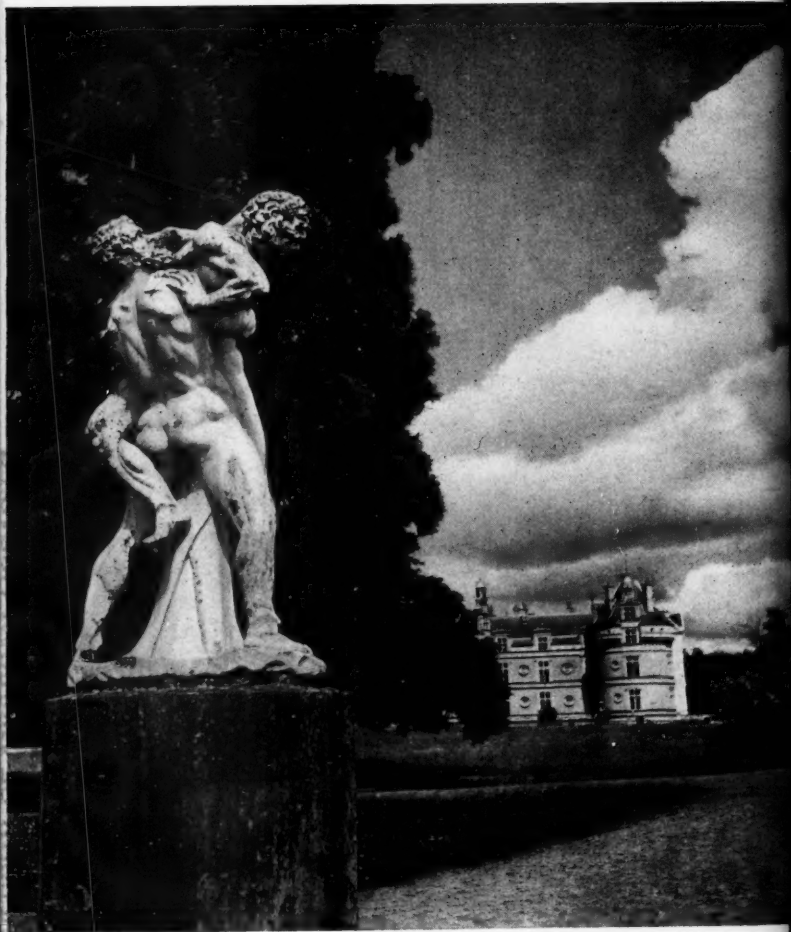
CHATEAU DE VILLANDRY



CHATEAU DE VILLANDRY



CHATEAU DE SERRANT, NEAR ANGERS : BEGUN IN MID-SIXTEENTH
CENTURY ON THE PLANS OF PHILIBERT DELORME



CHATEAU LE LUDE ON THE RIVER LE LOIR : BEGUN BY
JEHAN DU DAILLON, FRIEND OF LOUIS XI

